PAUL’S DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT

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Section 1.—The Epistles of Paul on the Righteousness of God.

AS Peter is called the apostle of hope, and John of love, Paul may be called the apostle of faith, or more strictly, of the righteousness of faith. Paul develops and applies the doctrine of the atonement in a full, comprehensive manner. Even though he was not a disciple of Christ when Jesus taught in the days of His flesh, Paul was still taught by the revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:12), and even caught up into paradise to
hear unspeakable words ( 2 Cor. 12:4 ). Apart from this, he was led by the Spirit into the import of the law and the prophets, and there found the truth which his nature needed, and which was all verified in the Lord’s atoning death. He reproduces the doctrine in many new lights, from the objective truth opened up to him in the Old Testament, and from his own deep experimental acquaintance with Christ as the end of the law.

As to the order of conducting the inquiry, we purpose to take the epistles in the order in which they stand in the common editions of the Bible. The advantage obtained by following the chronological order in which the epistles are supposed to have been written—for there is by no means a complete uniformity of opinion on their exact order—will not compensate for the inconvenience of departing from the well known arrangement. Rather we abide by it because we can discover no trace of any development of Paul’s views from one stage to another: he was like himself from the moment when he died to the law by the reception of Christ ( Rom. 7:4, 9 ). Not that his epistles are all alike; but they take their color from the circumstances and prevalent sentiments in the various churches.

While the apostle makes use of all the terms employed by the other writers, such as redemption, propitiation, peace, and the like, descriptive of Christ’s sacrificial death, there is one peculiar to him, THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD, which very frequently occurs. Though announced in the prophets, and indirectly alluded to by Peter and John in their use of the designation “the Righteous One,” it is specially found in Paul, who uses this abstract expression to describe the atonement in relation to divine law.

I purpose in this section to consider somewhat fully the righteousness of God, and to group together the Pauline doctrine on the subject. Amid the manifold negations of the times, it cannot be without its use to give a new grounding to this
important expression. That a great change has entered in the mode of viewing the righteousness of God, compared with the general recognition which it received in all the Protestant churches, cannot be doubtful to any one who has watched the changes of opinion on the subject of the atonement. This was long the descriptive name for the material cause of a sinner’s acceptance with God. The task we impose on ourselves is to ascertain the import of the phrase, “the righteousness of God,” and to define the place which it occupies in the Pauline epistles; and we aim at an objective statement, embodying the results of exegetical inquiry, more than a formal discussion of the opinions which have appeared on the ecclesiastical field, though we cannot omit all notice of recent views fundamentally opposed to the proper meaning of the terms. We wish to go direct to the apostles, except where it is indispensably necessary to refer to recent obscuring theories. The task of reproducing apostolic doctrine in its true significance and organic connections, is becoming an urgent duty; and the part assigned to exegetical theology is to recall, as far as may be, not only single phrases, but the general outline of those truths by which the apostles, as the chosen organs of Christ’s revelation, exhibited in the church the riches of divine grace as seen in the incarnate Word, and unfolded to them after His ascension.

An occasion for a full inquiry into the righteousness of God will be found also in the fact that a large class of minds betray a hesitancy which contrasts painfully with the liberty and boldness which marked the days of the apostles. This attaches to not a few who are truly occupied with the personal Redeemer and the contemplation of the divine Life, but stop short of defining the mode in which THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD stands related to LIFE in the Pauline scheme of doctrine. They evince little interest indeed as to the relation of these points to each other, seeking the fellowship of life with Christ without distinct ideas as to the indispensable conditions of this communion. Under the influence of what can only be called a mystic element, limiting the regard to Christ IN us, and failing to give prominence to Christ FOR US, they never breathe freely the liberty of the gospel. They have fallen under a scheme of doctrine which makes no distinction between the person and
the nature, the standing of the man and the renovation of the heart, the objective and the subjective; and though correctly regarding the person of Christ as the center point of Christianity and the fountain of life, they do not know how Life stands related to Righteousness—a thought pervading the whole Pauline doctrine.

Our first inquiry must be to ascertain the precise import of the righteousness of God in the Pauline epistles, and the place it holds in them. A comparison of these epistles with one another shows that there are two divisions or classes, with their own marked peculiarity, according as the apostle has occasion to counteract a Jewish Legalism, or a tendency to an incipient Gnosticism, invading the Christian churches while he yet lived. To the pharisaic cast of thought, with its attachment to the works of the law, and the enforcement of legal ceremonies as necessary, allusion is made in the Epistles to the Galatians, Romans, and Philippians; and there the righteousness of God is the central thought. To the oriental theosophy, with its claim to a higher wisdom, which put notions in the place of the personal Redeemer, allusion is made in the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians (Col. 2:8). There the personal Christ, and the life found in Him, are the central thoughts. But even there LIFE is viewed as subsequent to, and dependent on, the atonement. To the former class of the Pauline epistles we direct our attention in this section. And our purpose is to notice the place which THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD holds in them; for this phrase, as we shall find, is descriptive of the finished work of Christ, as approved at the divine tribunal, and the meritorious cause of our acceptance.

Throughout the doctrinal part of the Epistle to the Romans, the righteousness of God, as a descriptive name for the atonement, is the grand theme. The Epistle to the Galatians, again, is nothing else than an enforcement of the great truth, that to the close of the Christian’s career, the righteousness of faith is the one plea valid before God; and no second recommendation or condition, in the form of works, is of any avail (Gal. 2:21, 3:21, 6:5). In the Epistles to the Corinthians we find the
same theme in the same antithesis, with this difference only, that other points required attention in this church (1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 3:9). But when the apostle contrasts the two economies, the law is called the ministry of condemnation, and the gospel the ministry of righteousness. In the Epistle to the Philippians we find Paul, when very near the close of his career, still counting all things but loss for this righteousness, and far from having outlived this thought, which coloured his ideas in prospect of approaching martyrdom (Phil. 3:9). We find allusion to the righteousness of God also in the pastoral epistles (Tit. 3:5–7).

Having seen how prevalent is the reference to the righteousness of God in the Pauline epistles, we have next to consider in what it consists. And here it will be necessary to clear up some misconceptions.

1. The phrase cannot be held to refer to the divine attribute of righteousness. Divine justice, reflected in the law, is indeed the rule or standard on which, in a definite sense, the righteousness of God is measured; but this righteousness is not the divine attribute itself. The expression is uniformly introduced in Scripture as descriptive of what is due from man, or as the ethical response on man’s side to a divine claim. It is a name for that which Adam should have rendered, and not a divine perfection. Some faint color seems to be lent to the idea that it may be the divine attribute by the apparent connection—though it is but apparent—between the two statements in two successive verses: “The righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel;” and, “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness” (Rom. 1:17, 18). But the two statements, though placed in close juxtaposition, and apparently connected by a causal particle (γὰρ), belong to two wholly different economies, and have nothing in common. The tacit thought is: All alike need the provision of the gospel, and must repair to it; FOR they have nothing to expect but a revelation of wrath on their own account. The mode of expounding this phrase by allusion to the divine attribute was in reality overcome at the Reformation. Luther tells us that, having long had a desire to understand the Epistle to the Romans, he was
always stopped by the expression “the righteousness of God,” which he understood as the divine attribute; but after long meditations, and spending days and nights in these thoughts, the nature of that righteousness which justifies us was discovered to him; upon which he felt himself born anew, and the whole Scriptures become quite a different thing. It is evident, indeed, that there can be no allusion to the divine attribute of justice, because this would furnish the idea of an incensed God, which is the purport of the law; whereas the provision is one of grace, displaying a reconciling and justifying God, which is the essence of the gospel. Besides, such an acceptation as that which we oppose would not adapt itself to the general phraseology of Scripture. Thus, in the memorable passage which represents Christ as made sin that we might be made the righteousness of God, it is evident that in no sense of the terms, and with no propriety of language, could it be said of the Christian that he is made the attribute of righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21). The fact, too, that it is commonly put in antithesis to our own righteousness (Phil. 3:9), determines the significance of the expression to be something different from the divine attribute. The only part which the divine justice acts in this matter is, that it furnishes the rule or standard by which it is tried. When this righteousness is called a gift (Rom. 5:17), and said to be of God, or divinely provided, in contrast with that which is of the law and our own (Phil. 3:9), the idea is, that for those who have no righteousness of their own this is the gracious provision of God.

Attempts have been made, however, to explain the phrase in a mystic way, by referring it to Christ’s essential righteousness as a divine person. This notion, propounded by Osiander, and restored by some men of mystic tendencies, separates the one indivisible work of Christ into two parts, allowing pardon to be procured by Christ’s atoning blood, but maintaining that righteousness is the communication of Christ’s essential attribute. That argues a complete misconception of Christ’s mediatorial work, which was meant to bring in what was due from man as a creature, and has everything in common with what the first man should have produced. The essential righteousness belongs to God as
God, and to the Son of God as a divine person. But the righteousness of which the apostle speaks is that which was required from man as man, and which a Mediator, as our substitute, brought in to meet our wants; and though this could be brought in only by a God–man, uniting the two natures in one person, the whole is properly a created, not an uncreated, a human, not a divine righteousness. The supreme Lawgiver did not demand the essential righteousness of God, but what was proper to a creature made in the likeness and image of God. And it consists in action, not in the mere possession of a perfect nature. Adam had the pure nature, but failed in rendering the righteousness. But neither is it mere outward action or outward deed, but a perfect nature acting itself out, or approving itself to the Lawgiver by a compliance with the law in the sphere of tried obedience. ¹We have only to examine the language of Scripture to see that the righteousness of God of which Paul so often speaks is not His essential righteousness: for God does not demand from man His own essential righteousness, but that which is competent to a creature; and the righteousness of created beings corresponds to the thought of God and the will of God, from whom they derive their origin. The creature’s destiny is to bear the impress of the divine perfections in its sphere. Such would have been Adam’s righteousness had it been verified (5:12), that which the creature owes to the Creator, not that which the Creator Himself possesses. This will appear from the general phraseology of Scripture (Rom. 10:3).

2. Another opinion, much more common than the former, is that the righteousness of God denotes an inward righteousness, on the ground of which, whether it is already perfect or not, God pronounces men righteous by a judicial sentence. This is the interpretation given by Meander, Olshausen, and others; and it is still accepted by not a few believing men in various churches, though not to the same extent as formerly Lipsius, ²in his treatise on the Pauline view of justification, contends that the word never refers merely to an objective relation, but always to an inward condition as well, sometimes delineated in its principle, and sometimes in its future perfection. We must do these writers the justice to state, that by this they do not mean a justification by works.
While they interpret it as the inner righteousness which God works, and represent it as so pleasing to God, that on account of it He pronounces men righteous, though not yet completely perfect, they avoid the abyss of legalism, and lay stress on the faith which unites us to the person of Christ as the Life. This view has everything in common with the doctrine of Augustine and the Jansenists on the same subject; drawing a distinction between a man’s own righteousness (Phil. 3:9), as undertaken in the exercise of his unaided powers, and that which is “of God,” interpreted as meaning produced by divine grace. This, they think, is the import of the expression “the righteousness of God.”

But the antithesis between our own righteousness and that which is called the righteousness of God is different. It is between that which is subjective (our own) and that which is objective (God’s.) The opinion we are controverting, though different from legalism, and speaking of salvation by faith, is at variance with the Pauline doctrine, as will appear by two considerations. (1.) The objective relation expressed by the term stands out in bold relief when we consider the peculiar antithesis between Christ made sin for us, and believers made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21). These words intimate that, in the same sense in which Christ was made sin—that is, objectively and by imputation—in that sense are His people made the righteousness of God. Nor is the sense different in another passage, where the apostle contrasts the going about to establish a personal righteousness, and submitting to the righteousness of God (Rom. 10:3); or when he declares that he wishes to be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God (Phil. 3:9). It cannot be alleged that the antithesis in the latter passage is between works of nature and works of grace, works of law and works of faith. (2.) It obliterates the distinction between the person and the nature and the standing in the first or second Adam, with which the whole Scripture is replete. It confounds righteousness and life, which are ever carefully, the one being the way to the other. This is conclusive against the interpretation, if we would abide by the apostle’s use of language, and not efface his express distinctions.
3. Another opinion is, that faith itself is counted as the Righteousness. There are various modifications of this opinion; but none of them supposes an objective righteousness of God that has been wrought out, and then revealed in the gospel; and in almost every case it throws the mind back on itself in a neonomian tendency. (Neonomianism is the theory that the gospel is a law that takes the place of Mosaic law.)

a. To begin with that phase of it which is simply Arminian, or that has everything in common with Arminianism, the act of faith is made this righteousness. The answer is obvious: Faith, in that case, is transformed into a new law, whereas we are accepted without works of law. Besides, this theory assumes that God accepts an imperfect title for a perfect, by accommodating His right to man’s inability; an interpretation which, if carried out to the full, is derogatory to the divine law, and fitted to explode the whole redemption work of Christ. If the divine law can be relaxed by God’s receding from His rights, why may He not recede to a yet larger degree, and wholly supersede the necessity of the incarnation and atonement? The inflexible strictness and immutable claims of the divine law are taken for granted by the atonement. This view was advocated by Tittmann, who remarks that Scripture does not teach that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to men, but that faith is counted for righteousness. Though this has some color from expression, the expression, “Faith is counted for righteousness,” it loses this when the phrase is properly rendered. It should be rendered, “Faith is counted unto righteousness,” expressing the result, and lends no countenance to the notion that a substitute is accepted for a perfect righteousness. The righteousness of God is made ours through faith as the means of reception (Rom. 3:22). But, on the other theory, how can the sentence of the Judge have a sufficient ground? A method of acceptance, without a real righteousness which can be measured on the divine claims, neither meets the requirements of God’s justice nor satisfies an awakened conscience.
b. A modification of the same view, decidedly in a neonomian tendency, though of a subtle nature, is proposed by an ingenious opponent of the vicarious sacrifice. It is alleged that Christianity makes known the absolute forgiveness of sin without atonement as its procuring cause, and that the belief of this offer is considered as righteousness. Faith is thus supposed to be God–pleasing conduct, and accepted as righteousness. When a man renders this obedience, his conduct is pleasing in God’s sight, and reckoned for righteousness. Apart from other considerations, this theory supposes not a real, but a merely putative righteousness; and thus the foundation of acceptance is completely undermined.

4. Another opinion prevalent, is to the effect that the righteousness of God denotes the state of being justified. Not to mention names in the last age, this view was held by Stuart of Andover, and Wieseler on Galatians. The latter makes it the state into which the Justified are brought, or the condition of possessing Justification. This view, though certainly nearer the truth the others already mentioned, is faulty: first, because it is not the precise interpretation of the term righteousness; and next, because it transposes the order of biblical doctrines. Righteousness is represented in the Pauline scheme of doctrine as the basis, or material cause, of the sentence of justification, not conversely. So far, indeed, is this view correct, that it makes allusion to our relation Godward, not to moral conduct; but it fails to bring out the substantive character of the righteousness, as consisting in tried obedience. The term righteousness, as we shall see, does not in any passage mean the state of justification. If the state of justification does not proceed on an underlying righteousness as its basis, we are lost in the mists of uncertainty. The divine rectitude insists, and cannot but insist, on a true fulfillment of the divine law, and acquits on no other ground than on the presentation of an actual obedience. But, on this theory, what is assumed as the material cause of justification? No one can be justified, in the government of a righteous God, by a connivance at defects, or by being accounted what he is not by a mere make–believe. Scripture everywhere shows that God demands a real, substantive righteousness.
These are all baseless theories, and lead to the notion of an acceptilation, that is, to the reputeing of one to be what he is not. A complete righteousness, objectively brought in, on these theories, exists no longer. If so, faith wants its security, and rests on no corresponding reality. We must now ascertain the precise meaning of the phrase against these modern comments, which to a large extent declare that faith is taken for the righteousness, without any underlying reality. They may be in keeping with modern notions as to Christ’s atonement; but our aim is to investigate the biblical import of the expression. Having canvassed the subject negatively, it remains that we investigate it positively from the apostle’s words.

1. An analysis of the apostle’s language suffices to show that this righteousness is an actually accomplished fact; not less a historical reality than sin, and as productive of results, but in an opposite direction. These two terms throw light on each other. That this righteousness is the finished work of Christ, considered from the viewpoint of the divine approval, may be proved from the fact that it is presented to us as the great subject-matter of the gospel. It is said to he revealed (Rom. 1:17), and the righteousness must exist if it is revealed. The same thing may be argued from the title given to the gospel as the ministry of righteousness (2 Cor. 3:19): for how could an economy be instituted to proclaim what did not exist? When it is called the gift of righteousness (Rom. 5:17), and described as a provision unto all and upon all them that believe (Rom. 3:22), we must conclude that it exists.

That the righteousness of God is an actual reality, is proved by the twofold parallel which the apostle draws between sin and righteousness, and between the death which is the result of the one, and the life which is the equally certain result of the other (Rom. 1:18 – 3:18, and Rom. 5:12–18). If we consider these counterparts, we shall find that the apostle places sin and righteousness in marked antithesis. In entering on the description of
the prevalence of sin, he not only displays the wants of mankind, but exhibits the
two great counterparts of sin and righteousness as equal realities,—the one as the
world’s ruin, the other as its restoration. The one is a completed fact as well as the
other. They are the only two great events or facts in the world’s history, and they
confront each other.

At this point we may consider the peculiar shade of meaning which the phrase
acquires when put in connection with God. Why is it designated GOD’S
righteousness, or the righteousness of God? Modern interpreters generally
understand that it, is so called because God was its author, as Christ is also called
the Lamb of God because God was the provider of the Lamb. We regard it as
only a briefer expression of what is more fully described as the righteousness
which is of God (Phil. 3:9). The fact that the phrase is contrasted with our own
righteousness leads us to conclude that it means the righteousness of which God
is the author.

2. The manifestation of this righteousness as a historic fact is next noticed: “Now
the righteousness of God without the law is manifested” (Rom. 3:21). This refers
to its manifestation as a historic fact in the incarnation and finished work of
Christ. The allusion is not so much to its revelation in the gospel, as to the
bringing in of the righteousness once for all by Christ’s manifestation in the flesh
The language used by the apostle shows that it is coincident with the person of
Christ, and found in Him. It is one of those terms—and they are
various—descriptive of the obedience of Christ in the manifoldness of its aspects
and ejects. The personal Redeemer crucified is Himself the manifestation of the
righteousness of God; and though it was completed with His finished work when
He expired, and is not capable of addition, it is not to be denied that His living
through death was necessary to the perpetuity of this righteousness of God. It was
valid at death, but it is found in the person of the Lord (1 John 2:2). It is no
transitory, past, or putative righteousness, but one actually in the world, and the
only great reality in it; a righteousness for man, because the Lord Jesus, as very man, brought it into Humanity. And when the Judge beholds His Son clothed with our humanity, and presenting the righteousness of God, then follows the re–adjustment of man’s relation to his Maker, the reunion of God and man.

But the apostle is careful notice that this righteousness was witnessed by the law and the prophets (Rom. 3:21). First, as to the law, the sacrifices had special reference to it; and whether we look at the temple or at its services, at its priesthood, or the sacrificial blood that flowed in streams from age to age, we find a testimony to this righteousness. The law, too, in its moral aspect held up a lofty standard, which found no corresponding reality in any human heart, but pointed forward to Him who should one day come, saying, “Thy law is within my heart” (Ps. 40). It testified in both its elements foreshadowing good things to come, and pointing out, at least when Israel was in their normal condition, the readjusted relation of man to his Maker. As to the prophets, moreover, their expressions as to this righteousness are often as precise as Paul’s own words (Isa. 45:24, 54:17, 46:13). The apostle alludes to the testimony of the law and the prophets, to make it evident that this righteousness of God was no new, unheard–of doctrine, with which the church had no acquaintance in past ages; and in receiving it, men did not depart from Moses and the prophets, but embraced what had before been announced. It was no abrupt phenomenon, for which there had not been a preparation; for the Old Testament, in all its parts, bore testimony to the righteousness of God.

3. The standard of this righteousness is divine justice and the law of God. Righteousness in a creature is measured by the standard of justice. There is a manifestation of justice in demanding the satisfaction, and then in preparing and accepting this righteousness of God: “That He might be just, and the justifier” (Rom. 3:26).

But specially, the law is the standard of the righteousness; that is, the law
considered as a definite expression
of the justice of God. The idea of righteousness in a creature implies conformity to law: law is the sphere of righteousness, the element in which it moves. These two terms, law and righteousness, are correlative, and suppose each other. To unfold the principle of law to which this righteousness of God goes back, we find the apostle delineating both sides,—the law considered in its violation, and then in its positive demand with its promise of life. The transgressor of the law was under its curse, and the Surety came under it (Gal. 3:10). Again, it enforced its unalterable claim to do and live (Rom. 10:5), and Christ was made under it (Gal. 4:4), and so became its end (Rom. 10:4). Thus He obtained its reward of debt, not only for Himself, but for all whom He represented. A comparison of numerous passages where the work of Christ is mentioned, leads us to the conclusion that the phrase “righteousness of God”, wherever it occurs, involves a subjection to law as the rule of ethical rectitude. The law, as the transcript of God’s nature, and the mould in which man’s nature was formed, is immutable; and far from losing its authority by human inability, it ceased not to claim all that it ever claimed. The law to which the Lord subjected Himself, moreover, was THE LAW AS VIOLATED. The two aspects in which the apostle presents the law, not only to the Jews, who were dispensationally under it, but to the Gentiles, who were not, are these:

(1) That it urges its inflexible claims to sinless obedience as the only way to life (Gal. 3:12); and

(2) that it comes armed with the curse incurred by its violation (Gal. 3:10–13). That is the twofold demand of the law made upon every man. That is apostolic doctrine, however much at variance with modern theories, which all too superficially limit it to Israel; as if the law, in its true character, were not a republication of the primeval and eternal law, binding on man as man. The Lord was made under it in both respects for the production of this everlasting righteousness; and accordingly the work of Christ is described in its relation to
the law. Thus, it is said that He was made under the law, and that the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us (Rom. 8:4); that Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to every one that believeth (Rom. 10:4),—an expression presupposing the fulfillment which the law demanded, and could not but demand, till its end was reached. The additional words, “the end of the law unto righteousness,” leave us in no doubt that the realization of the law and its end are found in Christ.

4. As another constituent element of this righteousness, it must be added that it owed its origin to a God–man. It was a work to the production of which the twofold nature of the Redeemer was necessary. We have to trace the influence of Christ’s deity in the bringing in of the everlasting righteousness (Dan. 9:24). Though purely human in its essential character, it is the result of the concurrent action of both natures, and therefore of infinite value and eternal validity; and as He was under no obligation on His own account to obey, or to be under the law, or to be incarnate, His obedience is capable of being given away. Hence the constant reference to the divine Sonship when the fulfillment of the law is described (Gal. 4:4; Rom. 8:3). Without personal obligation of any kind, the Son of God, in assuming humanity, entered into all those duties which man was bound to discharge,—into the burdensome duties of an Israelite, and into manifold temptations and trials which His position as the sin–bearing substitute entailed. In short, He united a sinless humanity to Himself, that, by entering into every part of our obligation as creatures and sinners, He might bring in an everlasting righteousness. Till the law received its satisfaction in the twofold respect already mentioned—that is, by obedience to precept and penalty—the Supreme Judge could take none into favor.

But this obedience of the God–man was ONE indivisible. Though possessing a twofold aspect, it was one finished work. As man is under precept and penalty because he is the creature of God under the eternal law of obedience, and a sinner under condemnation, the surety obedience of the Lord must satisfy the law in both respects. Many expositors incorrectly sunder the two, or fix attention on the
one to the exclusion of the other.
Others acknowledge both, but unhappily make the two elements separately meritorious, losing sight of the link that binds Christ’s deeds and sufferings together as one vicarious obedience. The latter class of divines ascribe forgiveness to the sufferings, and the right to everlasting life to the active obedience,—an unhappy separation, though countenanced by eminent names. As it is the work of one Christ, it is one atoning obedience; and though we may, and must, distinguish the elements of which it consists, we may not disjoin them, for the two elements concur to form one obedience. That they cannot be separated appears from many considerations, and especially from this, that in every action there was a humiliation, and in every suffering an exercise of obedience. Both obedience to precept and suffering for penalty are part of every event in Christ’s life.

This atoning obedience extended over the entire life of the Lord, and was not limited to the few hours on the cross. It was but the verification of His sinless nature in various scenes of action and agony allotted to Him, but formed one obedience from first to last. That the element of obedience went into all His sufferings, sufficiently appears from numerous texts, which I shall not expound in this place (Rom. 5:19; Phil. 2:8; Heb. 5:8). If we call up before our minds the usual division of human duty, according to the different relations which man occupies to God, him, and his fellows, He learned obedience in them all; and with the augmented trials, as they thickened and deepened, His obedience was also augmented,—that is, was capable of increase, though always perfect. The humanity He wore was made by Him an instrument which He used for the great purpose of bringing in the righteousness of God; or, to put the matter in a personal, concrete form, Christ Himself is the righteousness of God. The Son of God made flesh, and obedient in life and death, is our righteousness before God. Scripture knows of only ONE righteousness uniting God and men, and the world has never seen another.
5. It remains to be added, that the righteousness of God was IN OUR STEAD as well as for our benefit. It is the more necessary to establish the vicarious nature of this righteousness, because not a few in every community are ready to admit the vicarious suffering who are not willing to allow the vicarious obedience in the whole extent of human obligation; that is, they divide the two parts of the law, the penalty and precept, into two portions, believing only that Christ’s suffering for our sins – and not his perfect obedience to God – is the fulfillment and expression of our calling. But the vicarious character attaching to the one obedience of the Lord is as plainly taught as the fact that it is a substantive reality; and when the apostle says, “We are made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21), he intimates that believers in Christ come to a realization of the fact that it was rendered in their room, and that they are one with Him in the whole transaction. The obedience of Christ realizes the lofty ideal or goal set before the human race; and on this account it is the greatest event in the world’s history. He was acting for His people, and they were representatively in Him. The entrance of Christ’s sinless humanity, with the law in His heart, became the central point of all time, to which previous ages looked forward, and after ages look back. He was the living law, the personal law,—an event with a far more important bearing than any other that ever occurred. It was the world’s new creation. It is made ours not less truly than if we ourselves had rendered it, IN CONSEQUENCE OF THE LEGAL ONENESS FORMED BETWEEN US AND HIM. Not that in the Lord’s experience the personal was merged in the official, for He had not, and could not have, any of those feelings which stand connected with personal guilt. He was always fully conscious of inward sinlessness when the sin–bearer and curse–bearer in our stead; and in like manner the redeemed, amid all the security of imputed righteousness, never cease to cherish personally the feelings of conscious unworthiness and deep abasement. That Christ’s suffering was vicarious is demonstrated in the words, “By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous” (Rom. 5:19).

As an objection to this mode of interpreting the righteousness of faith, it is commonly urged that the apostle nowhere uses the theological expression “the righteousness of Christ.” But when we examine the terms in which it is
expressed, the vicarious character of the righteousness is made the more evident.

CHRIST
HIMSELF IS OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. The incarnate Son, dying in our room, the realized ideal of what man was made to be, is made of God unto us righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30), in such a sense that we are said to be made the righteousness of God in Him. This is more remarkable: we are made all that Christ was; He is the Lord our righteousness (Jer. 23:6), and we are made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21).

Having noticed what are the elements of this righteousness and proved it is but another name for the Lord’s atoning obedience, it remains for us to add, with all brevity, the way by which it is appropriated, and its immediate as well as ulterior consequences.

6. The relation of faith to the righteousness of God is, that faith is the hand by which it is received. The righteousness is in another person, in such a sense that it is merely received as a gift, irrespective of moral worth on the part of the receiver. Why is such a gift given to faith, and to no other mental act? Partly because faith is the only way by which the soul goes out to rely on an object beyond itself, partly because faith is the most self-emptying act of the mind. By its very nature, it negatives everything but that righteousness which it receives. Faith is the receptive organ by which we lay hold of the righteousness; while the gospel, or word of God, is the medium of revealing it (Rom. 1:17). It is unto all and upon ALL THEM THAT BELIEVE (Rom. 3:22).

7. The immediate effect of receiving the righteousness of God is the sentence of absolution, called the justification of our persons; for it must be kept in mind that the man is justified, and not his works,—the person, not the nature. This sentence is complete at once, and capable of no addition; and it has a twofold side,—the ABSOLVING of the man from any charge of guilt, and the pronouncing of him ABSOLUTELY RIGHTEOUS, because in the possession of this righteousness of God.
8. The final point is the relation of God’s righteousness to the divine life he restores in us. This is an important issue in the Pauline epistles (Gal. 2:20; Rom. 8:10). The relation between the two is simply this: RIGHTEOUSNESS IS THE PRICE, AND LIFE IS THE REWARD. It is a relation intimated in the law, which was ordained to life, but was found to be unto death (Rom. 7:10). The man who should do what it enjoined was to receive life in return (Rom. 10:5). Modern theology, at least of the German type, and as far as it is modified from that quarter, evinces little interest about the relation in which the two points, righteousness and life, stand to each other. But a misapprehension here disorganizes the whole gospel. And the mystic theology which merely seeks communion with God, and life in Him, through the incarnation, has no adequate idea of the conditions on which life is conferred. They seek to delineate the life as an absolute donation apart from righteousness, or an atoning sacrifice as its ground. They speak of Christ IN US, not of Christ FOR US. There is no life, however, but through a vicarious death. The important question of the age, and of all ages, is, How does life reach us? and the answer is, By a vicarious fulfillment of the law in precept. and penalty; in other words, by an atonement.

Section 2.—The Reconciliation Set Forth in the Pauline Epistles.
I deem it necessary to notice this aspect of the atonement separately, though it comes before us in various texts. If the righteousness of God is the positive side of the Pauline doctrine of the atonement, reconciliation by the death of Christ is its negative side. This term is not, like many others bearing on the atonement, borrowed from the sacrificial ritual; for no connection can be traced between the two. It does not, as a term, recall either the priesthood or the sacrifices. Rather, we may say, the expression is taken from common life, and refers to a state of things where two parties, disunited by a quarrel or some cause of offense, are made friends by the adequate removal of the estrangement. This phase of the doctrine is peculiarly Pauline; and after the consideration given to the righteousness of God, it is the more needful to bring it out, because reconciliation proceeds on the fact of sin, and presupposes the displeasure and moral aversion of God to the sinner.

1. Reconciliation, denoting a NEW RELATION toward God, presupposes a state of alienation between God and man; that is, an alienation which was mutual. It was NOT exclusively on man’s side, nor was it brought to a termination by a change of moral disposition on the part of man. It was mutual estrangement: on man’s side by sin and enmity (Rom. 8:7); on God’s side by the wide gulf of separation which sin inevitable makes (Isa. 9:2), and by the wrath which cometh upon the children of disobedience (Eph. 5:6). There was mutual hostility, in the proper sense of the word, between God and man: we, on the one side, were alienated and enemies in our minds by wicked works (Col. 1:21); and God, on the other side, was provoked to anger, and under the necessity of visiting man as the object of His wrath (Rom. 5:9).

2. The change of relation implied in the term reconciliation was effected by the atonement, the great fact intervening between divine wrath and the objects over whom the wrath impended. This is the objective ground of reconciliation, as the special word rendered atonement in one passage properly means (Rom. 5:11); it
is the divinely provided fact which is received from God, and the ground of the new relation or favorable disposition of God toward us. We are said to be reconciled to God by the death of His Son as a divine person (Rom. 5:10), or reconciled in the body of His flesh through death (Col. 1:22). And the apostle’s words, which further announce that we are saved from wrath through Christ, plainly intimate that reconciliation, in the proper sense, is by the work of Christ, not by our change of disposition (Rom. 5:9). The favor of God is won for us by the blood of Christ, otherwise we should have been given up to condemnation.

3. The apostle represents reconciliation as ORIGINATING WITH GOD, who took the first step to bring it about. And this leads me to notice a marked difference between the two words PROPITIATION and RECONCILIATION. The former is applied to Christ as the great sacrifice, and the priest of His own sacrifice; the latter is applied to God as the originator of the reconciliation. 7 God the Father was an active party in all the reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:19). His love reconciled us, and His anger was pacified. The great fact interposed between His holy anger and our sin was the atoning work of Christ, provided in the exercise of compassion and love. The Lord’s atonement effected the removal of these sins; by which means the anger of God was brought to an end. That is the apostle’s doctrine, as will be evident from several texts which will come before us.

On the contrary, it is argued by the interpreters who have come under the influence of Socinianizing opinions, that the idea of reconciliation does not involve a new relation toward God, or restoration to divine favor. It is held that, reconciliation does not indicate any change on God’s side, but only a termination of enmity on man’s side; that God is never called man’s enemy; and that the New Testament never speaks of the reconciliation of
God to man, but from the other side of the relation, of the reconciliation of man to God. The whole opposition to the doctrine is based on this mistaken view of the phraseology. Though Scripture describes reconciliation from our side, this can readily be explained. The reconciliation is a divine fact, originating in the love of God; but from its nature it presupposes a displeasure not to be averted but by satisfaction or atonement. The mere fact that reconciliation is not absolute, but by the death of His Son (Rom. 5:10), proves that love is not the only element in the transaction, but that a new relation must be formed, or a transition effected from wrath to favor. This, too, is the uniform expression in the language of common life, which describes reconciliation from the side of the offending party. But the nature of the case involves a restoration to divine favor: for what is wanting in the case of those who were without reconciliation, and what is conferred by those who receive it, but the full removal of estrangement caused by some offense? And what do they possess who are reconciled to God, but the remission of sins, the removal of guilt, the restoration to a new relation, consisting in the participation of divine favor? There is a new relation on God’s side, that of friendship consequent on forgiveness. 8

But, it is asked, is not God immutable, the absolute Love? and how can He at once be regarded as loving and hating, as disposed to visit us with love, and yet estranged by our conduct to such a degree, that He cannot but treat us as under His wrath? To this the simple answer is: Scripture affirms both, and we must believe both. They well enough consist together, when we recall the twofold relation which man occupies to God, as a creature and as a sinner. God cherishes love to man, whether we think of man merely as he is the creature of God, or still further regard him as in a Surety, or in union with the beloved Son, according to that eternal covenant by which Christ and the redeemed come before God’s eye as one. That man is an object of displeasure, is not less evident to one who knows ought of divine justice; for sins could not but provoke His anger, and bring down punitive visitation in the exercise of His moral government.
Nor is it strange that anger and love co-exist, when we duly distinguish according to the twofold relation already noticed. We may trace the analogy to a far greater extent than is commonly done between God, and man made in the image of God. Thus, for example, David loved Absalom as his son, and gave strict commands to spare him in the midst of that rebellion which, on the highest moral grounds, must needs be repressed with stern severity. We see the father, and yet the righteous king, subjecting that wayward son to his frown on several occasions, because he hated his wickedness, and was provoked to deep displeasure. He loved him as his son, but as a righteous governor mingled punishment with mercy. In the same way, God loves His creatures; yet He cannot but cherish just anger against sin, and against sinners because of sin, as will be sufficiently evinced by the everlasting punishment striking on all who are out of Christ. And this can more easily be conceived, when we respect that love and wrath are in God an eternal, constant will, expressive of His nature. love being ever active to do His creatures good, so far as it is not obstructed; wrath being active, to visit sin with punitive justice. The atonement is nothing else than a provision to effect the removal of those obstructions or impediments which stood in the way of the full exercise of grace; and it consists in the satisfaction to justice in every respect.

Thus God represents things and persons as they really are: He does not act in any way at variance with His perfect knowledge of man’s double relation as creatures and as sinners. In so far as they perverted their rational and moral nature, they forfeited His favor, and are guilty before Him; in so far as they are His creatures, they are still the objects of His love. But to put them in a new relation, which was possible only by effecting the remission of sins, He made them by federal union one with His beloved Son, sent into the world to occupy their place, and made sin, as if He had become the very cause of the alienation. When He treated Him as if He were the greatest sinner, or as sin accumulated and personified, we see the reality of the
representative position which He occupied. And having provided the arrangement by which His perfections could be vindicated and His honor established, He puts men into a new relation—one of friendship and favor—the moment they receive the atonement (Rom. 11). They are made friends of enemies. The analogy from the mode of governing a human family throws light upon the whole transaction: for though we cannot in all respects compare God to man, we may infer God’s mode of action from the action of man made in His likeness; otherwise we could not in many respects know God at all. Can a disobedient son enjoy the favor of a parent in the same way as a son who is a pattern of filial obedience? When the displeasure is exchanged for the opposite by the removal of the offense, then the father restores him to favor. But we must meet the objections to this biblical representation more in detail.

**a.** It is alleged that God is never called the enemy of man, or said to be made a friend of an enemy; and consequently that the term reconciliation does not intimate any change on God’s side corresponding to a restoration to favor. The reasons why God is not called in Scripture our enemy are, that God is interested in His creatures on the ground of His relation as their Creator; that He cherishes mercy in His heart to the prodigal son; and that an eternal purpose was formed to reconcile them. We are to apprehend equally the heart of God and the government of God. Men living in sin cannot share in the divine favor; and reception into favor is undoubtedly involved in the idea of reconciliation.

**b.** It is held that we cannot adduce anything from biblical language to prove that reconciliation implies an obligation on God’s side involving the idea of restoration to His favor. This is of easy answer. The apostle connects reconciliation with an objective fact; and one passage may be adduced here as itself conclusive (Rom. 5:11). Paul teaches that we who were enemies were reconciled,—a statement which plainly announces two conditions: one a relation of wrath; another a relation of favor, based upon the great historic fact of Christ’s
death. Not only so: he adds, we have NOW RECEIVED the atonement; that is, as
the term signifies, have now received the objective ground of reconciliation; the
meaning of which can only be, that we have NOW received a peculiar relation, or
a reception into favor unknown before. He is speaking, not of a change of
disposition on man’s side, though that of course immediately ensues, but of a fact
provided for us in the love of God. The term reconciliation may be said to
comprehend what is mutual, because the alienation was mutual. The passage
intimates something on God’s side that carried in its train a restoration to His
favor.

c. It is further pertinaciously argued, that the New Testament language contains
no such expression as Gods reconciliation to man. It is nowhere said, in any
proclamation of the gospel among Jew or Gentile, that they must reconcile God to
themselves; for it is God who is always represented, and in the most natural way,
as reconciling men to Himself by Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:18–21). But how was
this done? Not by granting absolute remission of sins, not by a simple canceling
of the trespasses committed by us; but solely by putting Christ, as a
representative, in their place to do what they could not have done, and by inviting
men upon the ground of that atonement to be reconciled to Himself in things in a
mediator. The whole transaction shows two things—the love of Gods heart, and
the rectitude of His government. All who refuse the atonement are, from the
necessity of the case, left standing on their own footing as sinners, and out of
divine favor; whereas all who receive the atonement are reconciled. Every other
mode of reconciliation is deceptive, unavailing before God, and incapable of
affording any firm consolation, because it would remain always uncertain
whether God could accept the reconciliation. But as it originates with God, and as
God in Christ is the reconciler (2 Cor. 5:19), in the exercise of His Prevenient
grace, we have full certainty that it is acceptable. Certainly that which is of God
must be acceptable to God.

Thus on man’s side nothing further is required, than that he should enter into this
relation of reconciliation by
accepting the atonement as its ground or cause. Nothing was wanting on God’s side of the transaction; and the whole language bearing on this truth amounts to this, that God turns away His anger from, and shows favor to, all those for whom the atonement was offered.

We can thus, on biblical grounds, explode the whole Socinianizing arguments, which allege that reconciliation consists in a change of our hostile will and disposition toward God, and in that alone. Such an exposition, owing its origin to a foregone conclusion, does not satisfy the texts which put reconciliation in causal connection with the death of Christ (Rom 5:10); with His blood; with the body of His flesh through death (Col. 1:22). That there is a change on man’s side also is not denied; for the reconciliation is MUTUAL, as the alienation was mutual. But the change on our side is to this extent distinguished from the other, that it emanates from what God has done.

Section 3.—The Testimony in the Epistle to the Romans.

The Epistle to the Romans, written from Corinth before Paul’s journey to Jerusalem, which ended in his imprisonment (Acts 20:2; Rom. 15:25 - 16:23), the most connected outline of Christian doctrine given us by the pen of inspiration, was intended to place the Christian’s relation to God, or the article of justification, in its true light. Paul accordingly, in various passages, describes the doctrine of the atonement as the basis of the whole. The theme or proposition laid down at the beginning, and illustrated in the course of his reasoning, is contained in the quotation from Habakkuk, “The just shall live by faith”, or, more accurately rendered, “The righteous by faith shall live” (Rom. 1:17). The three words contained in this brief sentence, taken up one by one—RIGHTEOUSNESS, FAITH, LIFE—may be viewed as separate headings.
to three principal sections of the epistle: the first being brought out in contrast with the great fact of universal sinfulness (Rom. 1:17 - 3:27); the second extending, over the whole fourth chapter (3:27 – 4:25); and the third, setting forth premial life, fills the larger portion of the remaining doctrinal contents (5:12 – 39). The apostle is thus led by the scope and structure of the epistle to give a full exposition of the atonement at all points. Let us consider now how this passage in Romans sheds light upon the meaning of the atonement.

I. The first passage to be noticed is the following: Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, His righteousness; that He might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus (Rom. 3: 24–26).

We have here a compendious statement of the elements which constitute the great article of justification: (1.) The grace of God as the source or impelling cause; (2.) The blood of Christ as the meritorious cause or ground on which the sentence proceeds; (3.) Faith as the receptive organ or instrumental cause; (4.) The harmonious exhibition of justice and grace as the final cause, or the end contemplated by the whole scheme (}
ver. 26). These different points, when combined, comprehend the entire elements of the doctrine or great privilege of justification. But we shall single out the atonement, as here presented to us, for special consideration. The passage is difficult from its condensation, but we hope to make it clear by a few comments.

(1.) The death of Christ is referred to by use of three different terms in this passage, each shedding light upon a different shade of meaning that lies within the ONE WORK of Christ.

Of these terms the first is, THE REDEMPTION THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS. This term, as here used, denotes the objective ground in Christ on account of which divine action takes place. It describes Him as the cause, or author, of the actual deliverance. Captivity under an enemy’s power is of course presupposed, and also a ransom as the necessary price. Wherever the terms REDEEM or REDEMPTION are found in connection with the death, blood, or sufferings of Christ, the reference is sacrificial; and that supplementary expression contains an allusion to the ransom (Gal. 3:13; 1 Pet. 1:19; Rev.5:9). The close connection between the notion of a ransom and the allied idea of sacrifice is easily understood. But it may further be asked, What are we to understand by the phrase here used, “The redemption WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS?” The import is, that the ransom is found in His person, that He is personally the redemption of His people; for the ransom, or price, of our deliverance is found in Christ Himself. The expression cannot mean “by whom we have redemption,” as some put it, nor “in fellowship with whom,” as others choose rather to expound it; for the phrase could have the latter sense only if it could fitly stand alone, and give a competent meaning, separated from the verb (see 2 Cor. 12:3). The expression, as here used, conveys the idea that the ransom, or means of redemption, is objectively found in Christ’s person—The Crucified, and The Risen. 10 It does not give the idea that union to His person constitutes redemption, however true it is that we share in redemption only in this way. The passage means, that He is our meritorious
redemption, our infinite ransom, in the objective sense, and that He will continue to be so while His living person endures (1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:7). There the Judge beholds the church’s redemption, and every time He looks on the person of Christ He sees our eternal ransom.

As to the presupposition implied in the word, it always takes for granted a captivity, and involves the payment of a ransom for deliverance. Passages may be adduced where the word seems used to convey the idea of simple deliverance. In all cases it will be found that this phraseology is never without the idea of an equivalent, price, or consideration, whether more latent or more open to view, by which a deliverance is gained or a good is won. When the death or blood of the Lord is named in the phrase, there is no room for doubt that that is added as the ransom. The ransom secures deliverance FROM something, and redeems us to belong to another Master (Rev. 5:9; 1 Cor. 6:20). They who have the redemption obtain liberation from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13), from wrath, from death, and him that has the power of death (Heb. 2:14), and a transition to the proprietary rights of another owner, to whom they henceforward belong.

The second term here used is, A PROPITIATION IN HIS BLOOD. This expression is variously rendered: by many, as a propitiatory sacrifice; by an equal number, as the propitiatory or blood–sprinkled mercy–seat. In either way, it brings up the idea of divine anger appeased by the intervention of an economy involving a priesthood and sacrificial blood. Some minds will be swayed in the one direction, and others in the other. But in either case the sense amounts to this, that the blood of Christ pacifies, or propitiates, the justly kindled anger of the Most High; for there is a wrath against sin which finds an outlet in the infliction of punitive justice upon the sinner himself, if he stands on his own footing, or in the infliction of wrath upon the Mediator who comes into our place and under our obligations. The language here used, whatever the shade of meaning attached to it, involves the idea of appeasing God by sacrificial blood. This is self–evident from the whole phraseology of
Scripture, and it cannot be explained away.

For various reasons we prefer the rendering PROPITIATORY, or mercy-seat sprinkled with blood. This was the cover of the ark of the covenant, in which the law was deposited, and the annual ceremony of sprinkling it with blood was performed on the day of atonement. But all the ordinary sacrifices bore reference to it, and stood in some relation to it. This was, in a word, the centre-point of the entire Old Testament economy; and the whole argument of the Epistle to the Hebrews may be said to be echoed in this allusion, or summed up in the pregnant clause before us. But, in particular, there is a great similarity between the present passage and the statement that Christ’s death atoned for transgressions under the old covenant (Heb. 9:15). The idea is, that Christ is “set forth” to new, or, as some will have it, “fore-appointed,” from of old to be the reality of that blood-sprinkled mercy-seat; and, to apprehend the force of the allusion, we must go back to the symbolical and typical meaning. The symbolical import was the following:—The ark contained the law, and the ark’s covering or propitiatory covered its curse, whenever it was sprinkled by the atoning blood, as was the case from year to year; for, as the great day of atonement returned, this imposing ceremonial was annually repeated to cover sins from God’s sight. As to the typical signification, it was a prefiguration of Him who was personally to pacify the divine wrath, and therefore of that work of Christ by which at the appointed time He should at once fulfill the law and remove its curse. It deserves to be noticed that the phrase here used by the apostle conveys but one idea; and hence, in the grammatical construing, we must read the word PROPITIATORY in immediate connection with the words IN His BLOOD. The idea is one; and; viewed in this way, we must regard the words as meaning, Christ crucified the means of pacifying the wrath of God. On this account the mercy seat was considered as God’s throne in the midst of His people, where He showed Himself gracious, and communed with His people (Ps. 80:1). Here, too, rested the symbol of the divine presence, the glory of the Lord. We thus reach the conclusion that the central point in the old economy foreshadowed the true
propitiatory; and thus, in language borrowed from the ceremonial institutions, the apostle shows us that the way of propitiation was the same from the beginning. Hence, as it is said, “Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;” so we can say, “Christ our propitiatory is erected or set forth for us.”

The third descriptive name for the atonement is the term RIGHTEOUSNESS—“to declare His righteousness.” The question to be settled, in the first place, is this: Have we here the well-known Pauline expression which we have considered already—“the righteousness of God?” Or are we under the necessity of regarding it as the divine attribute of righteousness? A right view of the connection between the two things here put together—the righteousness of God and the remission of sins—will satisfy us that we have the well-known Pauline phrase. But as many eminent expositors, swayed by the view which they take of the connection of the clauses, hold the expression to be descriptive of the attribute of justice, we must prove that the phrase occurs here in no other sense than in other passages where there is no ambiguity. If the apostle has used the expression “righteousness of God” throughout the context to describe the atoning work of Christ, how can he be supposed to alter the meaning of his own phrase within the compass of a single sentence?

Some argue that the expression must refer to the divine attribute of righteousness, as it paves the way, according to them, for the reference to retributive justice in the following verse (ver. 26). But it is not so: that is a mere semblance of argument. Nay, we should rather say that it wants all probability, because it would be a repetition, a tautology. But no reason can be given for departing from the ordinary meaning of the Pauline phrase. We must attach a uniform, consistent meaning to the use of terms, and regard it as designating the atoning work of the Lord.

But the righteousness is brought out in a new connection, which we must now endeavor to trace. The apostle
had proved that between Jew and Gentile there is no difference, either in the ruin or in the remedy, and that the righteousness was for both alike. But now his thoughts revert to the saints of God who lived under the former dispensation, and to the retrospective bearing of the atonement as applicable to them not less than to those whose lot is cast in gospel times. If the blood–sprinkled mercy–seat was a prefiguration of the atonement, the finished work of Christ is considered as the accomplished fact, or actual manifestation of the righteousness which was required. The apostle therefore refers to the bringing in of the righteousness as a historic reality, as he had done in a previous verse (ver. 21).

This leads us to inquire, What is the connection between the righteousness of God thus understood, and the remission of sins that were past in the forbearance of God? A correct appreciation of this will make the meaning plain. Paul plainly refers to the time that preceded the atonement, and describes it as an economy of forbearance, during which the punishment of sin was deferred, and yet the salvation based on the atonement extended to many. How could there be this remission of sins during that past economy? The answer is supplied by the apostle: It was on the credit of what was ere long to be accomplished. That is the connection between the righteousness of God and the remission of sins here mentioned. There were millions who shared in the retrospective character of the atonement before Christ came in the flesh.

The connection of these two things will appear if we correctly translate the word that connects them together. The language will not bear the rendering given in the authorized version—FOR 14 THE REMISSION OF SINS. The Greek preposition, when so construed, never denotes the final cause, or the intention and design, for which a thing is done. Neither can it bear the rendering BY, or THROUGH, which others assign to it. It uniformly assigns the ground or reason on account of which a thing occurred, or an action was performed, denoting ON ACCOUNT OF. In the present case the preposition assigns the reason on account
of which the past remission of sins for thousands of years took place, viz. the future atonement, which in Paul’s time had become a historic fact. The righteousness of God, or the atoning work by which men are saved, has been actually manifested in the fullness of time, because the sins of millions had in previous ages been passed over and remitted. Without the actual bringing in of the everlasting righteousness, and merely on the credit of it as about to be, they had received forgiveness, and been enrolled among the spirits of the just made perfect. But since they had received remission of sins, it was absolutely necessary to bring in the expiation as a historic fact, or to give it a positive accomplishment. The retrospective efficacy of the atonement is made clear. But these were but effects or consequences of a cause which could not be withheld.

As to the peculiarities of the remission of sins that was proper to the Old Testament, we need not too curiously inquire. Some have indulged their fancy and been misled. A class of divines, headed by Cocceius, preferred to view the remission which belonged to the Old Testament church more as a passing over than as a true forgiveness. They asked, How could it be a true forgiveness, when the cause was not yet present? And they thought such a distinction warranted by the apostle’s expressions. But what difference there was between the saints of God in the Old and New Testament, was not in the objective remission, but in the inward consciousness of pardon and liberty. The difference was within. The apostle affirms the remission of sins under the former dispensation. And as that was possible only by the blood of atonement, since there could be no infringment of the divine justice or law, the righteousness of God must be actually brought in. Whether men regard the remission under the old economy in the light of a true forgiveness, which is the preferable view, or in that of a preterition, there can be no doubt of the retrospective efficacy of the atonement, and of the canceling of the guilt of sin before Christ came in the flesh by means of the atonement. The relation of the two economies, then, is as follows: The bringing in of the righteousness was necessary on account of the previous remission. The apostle shows that there was a causal connection between the righteousness of God and the
forgiveness of sins in all ages, that the cross was the great fact of all time, and that God had respect to it from the beginning. This is the only sense that the words will exegetically bear. Because the forgiveness was already given, there must be an actual satisfaction to divine justice, and an actual righteousness in the fullness of time.

Hence the three words which we expounded —redemption, propitiatory, and righteousness —delineate the atonement in different points of view; the first from the view—point of man’s captivity, the second from the view—point of divine wrath against sin, the third from that of the inalienable claims of the divine law. And this variety of names to describe the same great fact argues that, though the work of the Lord is one, it has manifold bearings—as numerous, indeed, as our necessities.

(2.) The design or final cause which God had in view in the whole matter of the atonement is next subjoined: that He might be just, and the justifier ( ver. 26 ). The allusion is to the concurrence or harmony of these two perfections of God. The word JUST, applied to God, means that He asserts just claims and inflicts just punishment. It is a perversion of language to interpret the term as if it could mean anything else than justice in the ordinary acceptation of the word among men made in the image of God. The contrast in which it is placed to divine forbearance and the allusion to the propitiatory, allow no doubt as to its import. Justice seemed to slumber during that period of forbearance; now it is displayed.

But this determines the character of the atonement. Such language would be unmeaning, if it were not admitted that the atonement is in the proper sense of the word a satisfaction of divine justice. This single clause, therefore, fully warrants the expression in common use, notwithstanding all the objections which have been adduced against it as unfitting or unwarrantable. And when the apostle adds,
“that He might be just, AND THE JUSTIFIER,” he alludes to the fact that these two apparently conflicting perfections, justice and grace, meet in full harmony on the cross: justice suffers no violence, and grace has full outlet.

This enables us to form a right judgment as to all those theories which allow only one element in the atonement, and reduce all to love. When modern theology commits itself to this one–sided theory, it is clearly out of harmony with the Pauline theology. As to the attempts which are at present made in many quarters to subsume justice under love, they are all sorry evasions of biblical ideas. Thus, when it is alleged that God must already have been reconciled when He gave His Son, and that there could be no further need of satisfaction, this is a mere confusion of ideas,—the confounding of a moving cause and a meritorious cause; the former being love, the latter the work of the sinless Sin–bearer in our stead. Unexpiated sin would for ever have stood in the way of obtaining divine favor, as is sufficiently evinced by hundreds of passages.

The other arguments drawn from the relation of the Fatherhood of God—the universal Fatherhood, as it is indiscriminately called—are equally refuted by this passage. It is rather a relation which draws down wrath, and calls for a propitiation. Only when sin is expiated can proper Fatherhood begin; and as to the notion which some try to propagate, that sin is rather a disease than a crime, the answer is: No man believes, or can believe, that the moral Governor is indifferent to human conduct, to the moral actions of His creatures; for this is contradicted by man’s moral nature as well as by Scripture (Rom. 1:32).

II. A passage of much weight, as deciding on the nature of the atonement, is as follows: Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification (Rom 4:25). The apostle, after discussing the case of Abraham as a ruling instance in proof of justification by faith alone, proceeds at the close of the chapter to describe faith as it is exercised on its proper object. He uses a striking name or title of God when he describes Him as the Christ–raiser, and represents
faith as exercised on God in this capacity; that is, on
God as the source of the atonement, and the acceptor of it at the hands of the Surety.

The first thing that summons our attention is, that OUR SIN is represented as THE CAUSE of Christ’s death; and it is the more important to determine with precision in what sense this language must be taken, because the consideration of the cause of Christ’s death is in some quarters much misapprehended, and in other cases much neglected, in the discussion of this question. For the most part, men have stopped short at the inquiry, What was God’s aim and intention in the death of Christ? But in endeavouring to apprehend the course of God’s procedure, we must distinguish between the divine intention and the cause in operation; and the present passage throws light on the entire question. A strict interpretation of the terms here used proves that our offenses were the proper cause of Christ’s death, and that His delivery to crucifixion is considered as the punishment of sin. It is not possible in words more emphatically to express the idea of a meritorious cause, than by joining together our offenses and the Lord’s SUFFERINGS by a preposition (dia with ac.) intimating a connection of cause and effect. If we are to expound by language and not by foregone conclusions, this is the only meaning that the words will bear. As our offenses were the meritorious cause of Christ’s death, it follows that by His delivery He paid the penalty. The phrases, TO DIE FOR SINS, TO BE DELIVERED FOR SINS, denote that sin was the cause of Christ’s death, and that the death was the due punishment.

The language in these two clauses implies Suretyship; and they cannot otherwise be understood. We may enumerate a few expressions where the preposition used to intimate causal connection occurs in the same construction. Thus, when it is “Ye shall be hated of all men for my sake” (Matt. 10:22); “They withered away, because they had no deepness of earth” (Matt. 13:5); “because they had no root” (ver. 6); “when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word” (ver. 21); “for the oath’s sake, and them who sat at meat with him” (14:9);
“when they could not come nigh Him for the press” (Mark 2:4); “Barabbas, who for a certain sedition, and for murder, was cast into prison” (Luke 23:19); “Many of the Samaritans believed on Him for the saying of the woman” (John 4:39); “for fear of the Jews” (19:38); “for which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience” (Eph. 5:6);—in these instances, and in others too numerous to name, the import is a causal connection, or a statement of cause and effect. When it is said that Jesus was delivered FOR our offenses, the words bring out the connection between our offenses and His sufferings and prove that it is a causal connection, on the ground of substitution. There must have been a relation formed between Him and us, of such a kind that He and His people were federally one, representatively one, legally one in the eye of God. But for such a covenant relation, our sins could not by possibility have affected Him, nor brought Him to the cross.

But we have next to consider what is meant by His being DELIVERED. This was the EFFECT or consequence, of which our offenses were the cause. These sins had the effect of handing over the Surety to the penal consequences which overtook Him from the hand of God and from the hand of man. This will be best illustrated from the ordinary style of speech. Thus, when a man is said to suffer for his crimes, no one doubts what the meaning is; and in like manner, when an innocent person suffers for our sins, or is delivered for our offenses, this means that he bears the punishment, though the sin was not personally his, but assumed by a voluntary act. How was Christ DELIVERED? The word means, that in visiting the Surety with the punishment due to us for sin, the Judge of all saw fit to deliver Him into the hand of sinners. Behind each part of the judicial action, traced in the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of the Lord, we see what was going forward at the divine tribunal. The human bar was the exponent, so to speak, or the visible counterpart, of the divine bar. The divine appointment appears in it all; for nought but this could make death a ransom, or give it efficacy for man’s salvation. Pilate’s bar, therefore, was the bar of God where Jesus was exculpated and condemned: exculpated on the ground of personal innocence, condemned as occupying the position of the sin–bearing
Surety.

He was JUDICIAALLY DELIVERED into the hand of men. It was not in a tumult of the people, nor in a secret corner, that the Lord was to be cut off, but after an examination and inquiry with all the forms of law. In fulfillment of prophecy (Isa. 53:8), He was placed before Pilate as our Surety, having no personal guilt, but condemned for our guilt, that it might not be charged against us. And all that befell Him, however unjust as regards men, was justly inflicted at the hand of God, who, besides what meets our eye, sent invisible strokes and penal inflictions to an inconceivable degree. The whole scene is easy of explanation on the principle of substitution. The Surety, offering to satisfy in our room, was brought before a human bar, in which God, as it were, erected His tribunal before Him,—arranging the transaction in such a way that all mankind might, to the end of time, perceive that the Judge found Him innocent, and yet pronounced His condemnation. He on His part promptly and cordially submitted to suffering, in obedience to His Father, who had given that power to Pilate in reference to the Son of God.

The last clause of the verse brings out that Jesus WAS RAISED AGAIN ON ACCOUNT OF OUR JUSTIFICATION. The preposition (dia. with acc.) must have the same import 16 and be translated in the same way in both clauses. Though this is not done by commentators, nothing can justify us in attaching a different sense to the same word in two contrasted clauses: whatever it means in the one, it must mean in the other. It is here taught that the sins of believers caused the death of the Lord, and that the impetration of a righteousness which could be applied as the sole foundation of justification, and was actually accepted on the behalf of all to whom it was to be applied, was the cause of Christ’s resurrection from the dead. Had one jot or tittle been awanting in His surety–work, the resurrection of Jesus could not have taken place.
But before passing from this text, it is necessary to obviate the misapprehensions here of its meaning that have been taken up in various quarters.

The language cannot mean that Christ was delivered to death that He might abolish sins. There are two forms of this mode of exposition: a lower one, to the effect that we might be withdrawn from evil by the argument or motive furnished by the turpitude of sin in condemning so much excellence; and a higher one, to the effect that the Risen One imparts a new life to abolish inward corruption. But the answer to both comments is, that the language cannot bear that final sense. It always denotes ON ACCOUNT OF, intimating the cause or reason on account of which a thing has taken place; and from this meaning we cannot deviate. To bring out the notion of abolishing future sin, other words must have been used, and some additional clause to make this sense apparent. The allusion is not to future, but to past and present sin.

A second mistranslation is, that He was delivered by MEN’S sins, or by wicked hands. But human malice and crime are never indicated in this way, as will appear by a comparison of other passages (Acts 2:23).

A third theory is to the effect that the sufferings of Christ were intended to remove the groundless fear of punishment. But such an exposition has no warrant from the terms here used; for it is not said that Christ was delivered because of our fears, but because of our sins. And as to the notion itself, it is enough to say that redemption can never be a deliverance from baseless fear, and an assurance of divine favor; for how could that harmonize with the stern menaces connected with impenitence and unbelief? It is a mischievous delusion that God does not punish sin.

The words mean that Christ sustained our punishment, and was delivered to condemnation, human and divine,
in consequence of our offenses, which were charged to Him, and spontaneously borne on the ground of a union between us and Him. But it is proper to add, as showing the foregone conclusions with which many come to the interpretation of this passage, that even if it were affirmed in the plainest and most unambiguous language that sin was the cause of Christ’s sufferings, and that His death was the proper punishment inflicted on Him for human sin, the opponents of the vicarious satisfaction, by their own avowal, would turn away the point of the evidence. Socinus says expressly: Though the thing were said, not once, but many times, he would not believe it; for the thing cannot be, inasmuch as the doctrine contended for is contrary to reason. Hence their whole aim is to discover any other possible meaning. To meet that rationalistic mode of treating Scripture, there is only one way. We must plainly tell such disputants either to stand within the pale of Revelation, and be bound by its announcements, or stand outside its borders altogether. It will not do to accept a Revelation, and then reject the doctrines they dislike,—to take it, and yet refuse it, according to their arbitrary caprice. They cannot be allowed thus to expound the contents of the divine word. They must take it or go without it, for they cannot be allowed to argue on the skeptic’s ground when they please.

III. Another passage on the atonement follows after a few verses: For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous one will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life (Rom. 5:6–10). The apostle, having described the fruits of justification,—peace with God, access, standing in grace, and the hope of glory,—proceeds to show that the Christian’s hope is not disappointed. Two a fortiori arguments are used, both introduced by a MUCH MORE, and drawn, the one from the two states of the man, and the other from the
two states of Christ. From the two states of the man he argues, that if we were justified when sinners, much more shall we be saved from wrath when made friends (ver. 9). From the two states of Christ he argues, that if our reconciliation was effected by the death of God’s Son as a thing vast, arduous, and wonderful, much more, as if no further legal difficulty were to be encountered, shall we be saved by His life (ver. 10). As the force of these arguments can be seen only by comparison with the guilt of our natural condition, he uses four descriptive terms to exhibit this. We were WITHOUT STRENGTH, that is, unable to comply with any duty or command (ver. 6); UNGODLY, that is, without God, and violating duty at every turn (ver. 8); SINNERS, that is, held under the bonds of guilt, and by nature attached to sin; ENEMIES (ver. 10), that is, either passively objects of God’s displeasure, as some take it, or actively enemies of God in our disposition; which latter is the preferable view.

We limit our attention to the question of the atonement as developed in this passage. When Christ is represented as dying FOR THE UNGODLY (ver. 6), the question is, Are we to regard this as a transaction in our stead, or merely for our benefit? Undoubtedly the former. And, to impress the idea of Christ’s vicarious position, the apostle borrows an illustration from common life. Thus: Scarcely for a righteous man will one die: I say righteous, for perhaps for a good man—that is, a great benefactor—some one would even dare to die. But in the world’s history it was never heard of, that one died for an enemy. Now the commendation of divine love is, that Christ died for enemies and sinners. The apostle, in supplying this illustration, intimates that we are to reason from the one to the other; and if Christ’s death is to be taken in the sense in which the death of one for another is here portrayed, the obvious meaning is, that one gives his life in the room of another. The death of Christ, far transcending every example of human love, which hardly ever dreamt of laying down one’s life for a friend, was a display of love for enemies. The terms, and the entire
character of the transaction as here described, allow us to form no other conclusion than that the death of Christ was vicarious. We have an unmistakable description of the character of Christ’s death, and of what the church must hold it to have been. No one, certainly, can understand this language in the sense that He suffered to give us an example of virtue. The illustration and reasoning show that the allusion is to a vicarious death.

From the Lord’s vicarious death two important consequences are derived, and it is considered as standing in close CAUSAL connection with them both.

1. The apostle declares that we are JUSTIFIED BY HIS BLOOD (ver. 9). This term is a synecdoche, that is, HIS BLOOD means more that the real blood Christ shed. It is the comprehensive totality of Christ’s life of sinless obedience up to the moment of His vicarious shedding of blood that works, in totality, for our justification, and not our own works or even our faith. Now, when we are said to be Justified by His blood, the expression intimates that we are not only discharged from deserved punishment, but personally accepted. The death of Christ is put in causal connection with the justification of our persons; but this could not have been unless it were a vicarious death, and a vicarious obedience accepted by Him who pronounces the acquittal. The apostle deduces, too, an important inference. He assumes that Christ’s death put sinners on a new footing, a new standing before God; in a word, that it rectified their relation. And then he argues: “If justified as sinners by His blood, much more shall we as friends be saved from wrath through Him.” This is an argument from the stronger reason.

2. The apostle next declares that we are RECONCILED TO GOD BY THE DEATH OF His Son (ver. 10). This is a phrase alternated with being justified. The term reconciliation, as we have seen, presupposes alienation, displeasure, or enmity on the part of the moral Governor of the world, and intimates that He has cemented with us a new relation
of friendship. That the change is caused by the death of Christ, is here expressly stated. In the language of Paul, where we chiefly find the use of this expression, God is never said to be reconciled: we are said to be reconciled to God. And the reason is, that in ordinary language the action of reconciliation is described from the side of the offending party. A prince is not said to be reconciled to an offending subject, though it is he who lays aside his displeasure: the subject is said to be reconciled to him, because the transaction takes its designation from the party offending. The atonement was interposed by God between His righteous wrath and us men in such a way as to put humanity on a new and friendly relationship to God. When the apostle affirms that we are reconciled to God by the death of His Son, he means that the death of Christ removed all the impediments on God’s side, so that His just anger was averted, and His free favor turned toward us.

Many interpret reconciliation as if it meant that there never was estrangement on God’s side, but only on man’s side; and, consequently, that it is completed the moment we lay aside our aversion, and by a course of repentance and loyal obedience show ourselves well affected towards God. That is not the apostle’s meaning, as is proved by the slightest examination of his words. He sets forth the vicarious nature of Christ’s death, and deduces reconciliation from it by the connection of cause and consequence, alternating the words RECONCILE and JUSTIFY as phrases descriptive of the same change of relation. If justification is a judicial act of God implying a change of relation on His side as well as on ours, reconciliation implies the same, as appears from the words: “If we, being enemies, were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.” The emphasis of the clause lies on the words BEING ENEMIES, and it affirms that we were reconciled when enemies. If so, it is self–evident that reconciliation to God does not consist merely in laying aside OUR enmity. For how, on such a theory, could we be said to be reconciled to God when WE WERE ENEMIES?
On the contrary, reconciliation is caused by something objective (ver. 12)—by the death of God’s Son. The apostle teaches that the vicarious death of Christ was the ground of restoration to the divine favor. The argument in this second case, altogether like the former, takes for granted that, in consequence of Christ’s death, we passed into a new relationship to God—one of favor. It is as follows: If such a change of relation took place in virtue of Christ’s death, if we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more shall we, being admitted into friendship, be saved by His life. This is an argument *a fortiori* based on the two states of Christ, taken in connection with the new relation in which we stand. And the apostle could not have argued in this way, if there had been nothing objective effected by the death of Christ,

Paul makes it clear that through Christ’s death and our reconciliation to God, we are restored to divine favor. He does not base his reasoning, however, on the moral change effected: he does not say, If God loved us when we had no spiritual affection toward Him, how much more will He save us when we have amended our disposition and changed our sentiments towards Him! Rather when God stands related to us as a Father, and not as an offended Judge, then an inward change ensues: confidence and delight in Him must be the consequence, the immediate fruit, of reconciliation. Hence, glorying is mentioned as the result of receiving the objective atonement; and the apostle declares: “We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement” 21(ver. 11).

Someone may object, “How can God hate us but also love us at the same time?” How does His love and wrath coexist? This difficulty vanishes when we come to see that love and wrath well enough consist together, because men are presented to His view both as the creatures of His hand, and as sinners, yet the objects of His grace. He had wrath and enmity against their sin, according to His holy nature and the inalienable claims of justice; but He had love to His creatures, and a
disposition to do them good. And the atonement, as an arrangement interposed between divine wrath on the one hand, and the sinful human race on the other, was the removal of all the impediments that stood in the way of the divine love. The text shows that free love provided the atonement, but that men were ACTUALLY TAKEN INTO FAVOUR ONLY ON THE GROUND OF SATISFACTION.

IV. Another memorable passage on the atonement is the section in the fifth chapter, which institutes a comparison between the disobedience of the first man and the obedience of the second man (vers. 12–19). From this section two verses may specially be selected, as giving a forcible illustration of the satisfaction of Christ: Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men to justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous (Rom. 5:18, 19). The principal point to which the apostle directs attention, and which met him at this part of his argument, was, How could the satisfaction of ONE: MAN avail for many? And he shows that it is not surprising to find the entire ground of our redemption in the work of one, when we go back to the original constitution given to the human family: for we are saved upon the same principle, and by a constitution altogether similar. Without anticipating the result, let us analyze the passage.

In drawing the parallel between the two representative men in whom the whole human race is found respectively, Paul says: “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin” (ver. 12). To forestall mistakes, we must observe that this language DOES not mean by one man as created, but by one man as sinning. That this is the import of the expression, is proved by the frequent repetition of the same words: by one that sinned (ver. 16); by one man’s offense (ver. 17); by one man’s disobedience (ver. 19). The apostle does not mean that sin entered in consequence of some flaw or defect in the primeval constitution of man’s
nature, as if he were but earthly or carnal when he came from the Creator’s hand.

The words before us mean, one man as he committed sin.

Another point that must be correctly apprehended in order to obtain a right view of the whole is, What is the import of SIN here described as entering? The answer is, that it refers go Adam’s sinning act. This is evident from the language which the apostle holds all through the section, and which is frequently alternated with other terms of similar import. This terrible phenomenon—SIN personified through this and the two following chapters as a potentate, tyrant, or power—is described as entering into the world, where it was before unknown. It had a commencement in the world, and subordinated all to its sway. But while Adam’s first sin is specially meant, as is clear from all the various antitheses in which it here stands to the atoning work of Christ, we are not of course to dissemble it from the sinful nature to which it adheres.

The next term is DEATH, represented as the penal consequence of sin. Temporal death is, beyond all doubt, comprehended in the apostle’s words; for he elsewhere says, that in Adam all die (1 Cor. 15:22). On the other hand, the limitation of the meaning to temporal death is quite unwarrantable, when the contrast obviously leads us to the most extensive signification. This is confirmed by the language of the New Testament generally, and by the Pauline phraseology particularly (Rom. 1:32, 6:21). The term death must be taken here, and in the Mosaic narrative, in the widest sense, comprehending all that misery which flows from our estrangement from God—the antithesis of divine life.

Next, the apostle draws a parallel between the two representative men as follows: As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so by one man righteousness entered into the world, and life by righteousness. Such would have been the two counterpart members, had the parallel been formally completed at
the point where the comparison began (ver. 13). But the latter member is withheld, and we have only a compensation for it in the words, THE FIGURE OF HIM THAT WAS TO COME 23( ver. 14). The full parallel is resumed, and at length completed, further down in the context (ver. 18). But before advancing to that verse, which fills up the parallel (ver. 18), the apostle states some points of disparity, in which there IS A MUCH MORE, a preponderance, again and again repeated, as found on the side of Christ. It is a much more of potency in the causes in operation (ver. 15), and a much more also in the results produced in connection with such causes (vers. 16, 17). Having stated the general resemblance, and certain points of dissimilarity, the apostle returns to the broad outlines of the parallel, and gives full and formal expression to it (ver. 18); and the words indicate a conclusion drawn from the whole previous statement.

But we forbear further commentary, as we have adduced the passage only as a striking exhibition and proof of the atonement. The apostle is anticipating the objection, How could the obedience of one avail for millions?—a difficulty that must be met. The current notion among the Jews of old, and among self–righteous men at all times, is: If our own virtue and works of the law do not pass for righteousness, how can another man’s avail, and especially how can it avail for countless numbers? The apostle’s reply is, that this is readily understood when men take into account the peculiar constitution under which the Creator saw meet at first to place the human family. The principle on which we are saved is the same as was originally set before mankind. The way of justification by the obedience of another stands on a similar footing to the way in which we fell: the principle is that of ONE FOR MANY. As by the trespass or offense of one it is to all men to condemnation, so by the righteousness of one—in other words, by the approved and accepted obedience of one—it is to all men to justification of life. Here two things are comprehended as standing in connection with the atonement:

(1) the justification of the man, that is, of the person in his relative standing;
(2) the restoration of the nature by the donation of life. The former paves the way for the latter. The life is premial life, and follows as the consequence of righteousness, but is comprehensive both of spiritual and eternal life. This life follows as the reward of righteousness, according to the principle set forth in the law: “This do, and thou shalt live.”

The second of the verses above quoted grounds the former by furnishing additional explanation. The two clauses of the one (ver. 18) may be connected with the two clauses of the other respectively (ver. 19); and the grounding particle for links them together in this way: “Therefore, as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation,—FOR by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners,—even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life; FOR by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” What is the obedience of one, by which many are made or constituted righteous? This may easily be perceived from the counterpart disobedience by which many are made sinners. It is not enough to say that the death of Christ is so called because on His part it was a proper act of love. Nor will it suffice to say that the atonement is so called because suffering was imposed by the Father’s command, and responded to on Christ’s part by an act of obedience. These views make no room for the element of active obedience, as not less necessary than the suffering. The words are plainly descriptive of the entire obedience of Christ, active and passive. This is evident from the fact that by means of it many are constituted righteous, which can only be by the double element; and it is further evident from the disobedience of Adam in the opposite member. For if Adam’s trespass contains two parts,—an obligation violated and a guilt incurred,—and if the second man must enter into both, since the divine justice could not permit either to be relaxed or modified by one jot or tittle, it follows that in that obedience of one man, which makes many righteous, we must comprehend both these elements. His obedience thus included all that was required of man in innocence, and all that was justly incurred by man in his state of guilt.
This great transaction was not by accident. The obedience of one for many, and as making many righteous, was the true and intended effect of Christ’s incarnation—the great compensation set over against the fall of Adam. It is the result of a constitution expressly parallel to that under which man was made, and, like it, of a positive and sovereign character; and it is here said to be the principle of ONE FOR MANY. Scripture thus puts the disobedience of Adam in express antithesis to the obedience of Christ. It speaks as if there had been but two men in the world into whose obedience or disobedience their entire seed enters. And indeed there have been but two representative men, and under the one or the other we are all comprehended. A comparison of the two, such as is here instituted, greatly conduces to the correct apprehension of the constitution which it pleased God, in the exercise of sovereign dominion, to give to the human race. These two truths shed reciprocal light on each other, and are set over against each other. For this there may be many reasons; but one reason, besides the vivid contrast, undoubtedly is to furnish the only analogy which can be produced. Nor can I forbear to say that it would have contributed not a little to the clearer understanding of the whole subject, had the Scripture method on this great theme been universally followed. Had the atonement and the fall been more put in this contrast, the light shed by this means on both would have been steadier and clearer, and many a prejudice would have been removed. Many who have doubts of the one, would have had their difficulties overborne or removed by the evidence of the other.

To all the cavils of human reason the answer is easy. It does not fall to us to justify that constitution given to the first man, and renewed in the second man. Nor does it become us too curiously to inquire into the reasons of such an appointment, when we call to mind that the sovereign will of God, holy, wise, just, and good, is reason enough. To give reasons, argues a pretension to knowledge which is not given to us. Let it suffice that it
pleased God to constitute man in a public head, who was made in the image of God, and summoned to the test of obedience in the full maturity of all his powers, in the possession of a sinless nature, and with a full knowledge, doubtless, of his representative position. The constitution given to man differed from that which was given to angels, who must have been placed on their own individual footing, from the fact that they partly stood and partly fell.

More than anything else, this original constitution given to man throws light on the atonement. We are redeemed in the same way: the obedience of one is the righteousness of many. This calls for a twofold submission on our part—a submission to the DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY which gave the constitution to which we have referred, and a submission to the divine WORD, which here emphatically proclaims it as a certain truth. We must accept both. Thus sin enters by the first man, and spreads through the race, and death by sin. On the contrary, righteousness, or the atonement, enters by the second man, and is unto all and upon all them that believe; and life is by righteousness. This is the Pauline parallel; and I have only to add that it would have been well if human writers, in their discussions on the subject, had been content to receive this divine constitution on God’s authority as a truth, and with the heart–loyalty due to His sovereign dominion. The whole matter has been complicated and perplexed by laborious attempts to commend it to the natural reason of men; all of them sorry efforts to make men believers by reason, whereas faith must stand, not in the wisdom of man, but in the authority of God.

The testimony of this passage is conclusive as to the great fact that the atoning obedience of Christ puts us into the category of righteous ones, for so the words signify. 24 It was the obedience of the Son of God, however; for not only are we here to recall the primeval constitution, but also the divine dignity of the Surety. Not that He obeyed in the divine nature, but He who did obey was a divine person—the Son of God; and it must never be forgotten that He took our nature
as a workman takes a tool or instrument to accomplish a certain end. This obedience to the law in all its parts He required not for Himself, but wrought it out for us, that it might at once have infinite value, and be made an absolute gift.

V. Another passage of great importance on the atonement is the section in the sixth chapter, which sets forth the conscious relation which the apostle says he occupied to Christ in His death: What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall he also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now, if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him (Rom. 6:1–8). This memorable passage must be clearly understood, because the same language recurs in many of the Pauline epistles. We have therefore to inquire whether the expressions represent the death of Christ as vicarious, or whether they are to be explained according to a mystical interpretation, without reference to the idea of substitution.

To understand what is meant by DYING WITH CHRIST, we must apprehend the connection. The apostle, after describing our standing in the second Adam (5:12–19), had added, that where sin abounded, grace much more abounded. Perceiving the objection that would be made to such a view of grace, the apostle says, “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” and rejects the imputation with abhorrence. Not content with this, he proceeds to prove that this perversion could not ensue, for a reason which touches the deep
elements of God’s moral government, and renders it impossible. What is the reason he assigns? It is not the influence of a new class of motives which he brings out at the end of the chapter, but a solid ground in law. He argues from a fact—the great objective change of relation intimated by dying with Christ.

We have to inquire, then, what is intimated by those expressions on which he lays the greatest stress of his argument (ver. 12): DYING WITH CHRIST, and DYING TO SIN, BURIED WITH CHRIST, CO–CRUCIFIED and CO–PLANTED with Him. One text will serve as a key to the meaning, viz., “We thus judge, that if one died for all, then all died,” for so the words must be translated (2 Cor. 5:14). There the apostle, it is obvious, uses these two expressions interchangeably: HE DIED FOR ALL, and ALL DIED IN HIM. He describes the same thing from two different points of view. The first of the two describes the vicarious death of Christ as an objective fact; the second sets forth the same great transaction, in terms which intimate that we too are said to have done it. Thus we may either say, CHRIST DIED FOR US; or say, WE DIED IN HIM. We may equally affirm He was crucified for us, or we were co–crucified with Him. This alternating phraseology, duly observed, makes all plain. But it must be fully apprehended that we have NOT TWO ACTS presented to us by the expression,—one on Christ’s side, and another on ours, that is, an experience on our side parallel to His. We have but ONE PUBLIC REPRESENTATIVE, CORPORATE ACT PERFORMED BY THE SON OF GOD, in which we share as truly as if we had accomplished that atonement ourselves.

The mistakes committed in the interpretation of this chapter of the epistle—and they have come down from ancient times—are mainly due to the fact that the ideas of the fifth chapter have not been carried into the sixth. If we carry the thought supplied by the representative character of the two Adams from the one chapter into the other, the difficulty vanishes. Nay, the very same form of expression is found in the fifth chapter in the statement: “By ONE MAN SIN
ENTERED into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, FOR: THAT ALL SINNED ( Rom. 5:12 ).” The meaning is, all men sinned in the first man’s act of sin; for that public act was representative, and common to all his offspring. There have been, in fact, but two men in the world, with the two families of which they are the heads; there have been but two public representatives. The idea of Christ’s Suretyship, and the representation of His atonement as the act of one for many, run through the entire section, with only this peculiarity or difference as compared with other passages, that here WE are described as doing what our representative did; that is, the one corporate act is described from our share in the transaction. But let us notice the expressions.

It is said WE DIED TO SIN ( ver. 2 ). As this phrase is much misunderstood, its meaning must be ascertained. It frequently occurs in the Pauline epistles in different forms, and uniformly alludes not to an inward deliverance from sin, but to the Christian’s objective relation, or to his personal standing before God in the vicarious work of Christ; it means that we are legally dead to sin in Christ. 26 This is rendered quite certain by two other expressions occurring in the section. The first of these passages applies the same language to the Lord Himself; for He is said to HAVE DIED TO SIN ONCE ( ver. 10 ). Now the only sense in which the Sinless One can be regarded as dying to sin, is that of dying to its guilt, or to the condemning power which goes along with sin, and which must run its course, wherever sin has been committed. He died to the guilt or criminality of sin, when it was laid on Him; certainly He did not die to its indwelling power. The second of these passages shows that this dying was the ground or meritorious cause of our justification: “he that is dead has been justified (not FREED, as it is unhappily rendered in the English version) from sin” ( ver. 7 ). The justification of the Christian is thus based on his co–dying with Christ; that is, we are said to have died when Christ died, and to have done what Christ did. The words undoubtedly mean a co–dying with Christ in that one corporate representative deed; that is, they mean that we were one with Christ in His obedience unto death, as we were
one with Adam in his disobedience. Christ’s death to sin belongs to us, and is as much ours as if we had borne the penalty. And the justification by which our persons are forgiven and accepted, has no other foundation. It is noteworthy that the fifth chapter, from which this idea is carried over, describes all this in the third person; whereas the sixth chapter describes it in the first person, and from our own share in it.

It is also said in this section, that OUR OLD MAN IS CRUCIFIED, or co-crucified, with Him. The entire section of which this is a part, is to be regarded not as an encouragement or exhortation, but as a statement of fact; it does not set forth anything done by us, but something done on our account, or for our sake, by a Surety, in whose performance we participate. But, it may be asked, may we not hold with the great body of expositors, from the Reformation downwards, that these varied expressions designate two separate classes of actions,—one done by Christ, and a similar or parallel one by us,—and that the phraseology must be taken in two different senses as used respecting Christ, and as used respecting us? No, the expressions are not to be taken in a proper sense as applied to Christ, and in a figurative sense as applied to us. The acts are NOT TWO, BUT ONE, described from two different points of view. There is not one crucifixion on the part of Christ, and a second, parallel and similar but different, crucifixion on the part of His people. There is but one corporate act, as we noticed in the previous chapter,—the act of one for many. 27

But what is the OLD MAN that is said to be co-crucified with the Lord? Does not this refer to inward corruption? Though commentators have long expounded it in this way with a sort of common consent, such an explanation is untenable, as it would make the expression synonymous with the next clause, and thus not only yield a bald tautology, but give an instance of inept reasoning; for the one clause is made the ground or condition of the other. The old man is CRUCIFIED, IN ORDER THAT the body of sin, or sin within us as an organic body, might be
destroyed. The old man said to be crucified with Christ, is therefore our old personality, or Adamic standing, which is terminated that we may have a new relationship to God in the crucified Surety; a privilege which lays the foundation also for the destruction of inherent corruption. But these two (ver. 12)—person and nature—are not to be confounded; nor will the apostle’s reason admit any comment which confounds them.  

But, to bring the matter more fully home to the mind of his readers the apostle says WE WERE BAPTIZED INTO His DEATH (ver. 3). The Lord, in the historic outline of His death, is presented to us as laden with sin, and satisfying divine justice; and baptism, as a symbolical representation, exhibits our connection with Him, or participation in that great corporate act which was in the room of all His people. We are supposed to have done what He did, and to have undergone what He underwent, to satisfy divine Justice. The symbol of baptism showed this, and the apostle recalls the fact that it was a baptism into His death, an emblem of oneness with Christ, or fellowship with Him in His death to sin (ver. 10).

But when it is said that we were CO–PLANTED with Him IN THE LIKENESS of His death, it may be asked, does not this seem to run counter to all that has been said as to the one corporate representative act of Christ? If mention is made of the likeness of His death, does not this seem to intimate two acts,—one on Christ’s side, and one on ours? Does not this take away our attention from the objective act of substitution, to something more mystical in human experience analogous to the work of Christ? By no means. It is one act and one atonement in the room of sinners to which all these terms refer. And the expression, “in the likeness of His death,” seems to be an allusion to baptism as an emblem, likeness, or symbolical representation.  

The connection of the two verses, it seems, proves this.

But another thought to be noticed is, that the oneness with Jesus in His death, or
the co-dying with Him,
secured the ulterior end of life. The DEATH WAS THE PRICE OF THE LIFE. The one was the cause, the other was the unfailing reward or consequence. We must put these two in juxtaposition.

First, then, all the above–named expressions, and others similar to them, point to a discharge from a hard master. That master is SIN, which is described through these two chapters as a mighty potence, or tyrant, that entered into the world by one man, and reigned over the human race. This is more than a personification, more than a figure of speech, for the apostle is struggling to express a relation where human analogies break down. He has no term by which to describe it but the power of a potentate, or of a master, over his slave. By death this yoke is broken, according to the language of Job: “There the wicked cease from troubling; and the servant is free from his master” (Job 3:19). The apostle declares that not only was the death of Christ a substitution in our room, but that, in consequence of its being a definite and express substitution, we may be said to have done what He did. And, in virtue of our oneness with Him, we are discharged from sin as a master.

But THIS SECURES LIFE; for this life is the fruit; effect, or reward consequent on the former. If the Christian died with Christ, he will also live with Him, by a bond as sure as that which obtains between antecedent and consequent, between Christ’s own death and resurrection. If we died with Him, we believe that we shall also live with Him (ver. 8). But if that is so,—if Christians live with Christ as surely as they died with Him,—it follows that their life can no longer be devoted to sin, but to God, as was the life of Christ. They have fellowship with the Lord in His RESURRECTION–LIFE, a participation of the same holy LIFE that the Lord lives in heaven, and cannot, therefore, surrender themselves to a course of sin.

Now this is the grand answer to the current cavil or objection to the doctrines of
VI. A further testimony, of much weight on the doctrine of the atonement, is as follows: For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Rom. 8:3). The apostle had stated at the commencement of the chapter, that, notwithstanding the indwelling sin which still adheres to us, and which he described in the previous chapter (7:15–25), there is no condemnation to the Christian; and then he subjoins the text under our notice as the ground of the noncondemnation, and of the deliverance from the law of sin and death. The passage amounts to this, that there is NO CONDEMNATION because SIN HAS BEEN CONDEMNED IN CHRIST’S FLESH, and the approved fulfillment of the law is laid to our account. The following elements of the atonement come to light in this passage:

1. The source of the atonement is traced to God the Father having a Son to send. The language emphatically declares that the whole atonement owed its origin to God as its source, and that it must be read off from the act of the Father as sending His Son to offer it. It emanated from God as its fountain; for it could not have been extorted from Him had He not spontaneously devised and executed it. And as He was the source from
whom it came, so was He the authority by whom it was accepted as a complete satisfaction. What was prepared by God, must of necessity be acceptable to Him.

2. The person by whom the redemption–work was finished, was the eternal Son, His own Son, His proper Son. This title indicates not only filiation, but true and proper Godhead; for He is the Son of God in a unique sense, not by adoption, not by incarnation, not by resurrection, but by an eternal act of generation, in consequence of which He is designated the only–begotten Son. And the influence of the divine nature of the Lord on His whole atoning work is not obscurely indicated: it was the work of a divine person, and owed to this its boundless value and dignity. Thus the Lord Jesus, in his redemption–work, cannot be regarded as mere man, but as God–man, in whom both natures concurred at every step to the production of a joint result. The work is thus one, because the person is one. It was the deity of God’s Son that gave His redemption work a value which is altogether infinite; and, thus viewed, we find that it not only emanated from God, but was consummated by the workmanship of Him who was God.

3. The Son of God was sent in THE LIKENESS OF SINFUL FLESH; that is, of the flesh 31 of sin. This expression must be carefully investigated, lest we should either err by overstatement, or come short of its meaning by defect of statement. It goes very deep, but we must be careful to fathom it. One thing is self–evident: the language must be understood as affirming the true incarnation of the Son of God, and as ascribing to Him a real humanity, in contrast with every Docetic or phantom theory of His becoming man. And further, the union of Godhead and manhood in the one person of the eternal Son carried with it this consequence, that it must needs be sinless humanity, in as much as the Son of God could not have united to Himself anything sinful. By the operation of the Holy Ghost, His humanity, which never for an instant existed apart from the divine person of the Son, was generated pure; like sinful flesh indeed, but not sinful flesh. And this was secured by the fact, that though He took His flesh from Adam through the
Virgin, He never was in Adam’s covenant, but the second Adam, the restorer. He was a kinsman–Redeemer, to be within the pale of our humanity; but He neither derived any taint of mind or body by transmission from Adam, nor contracted any guilt for which He was personally responsible.

The import of the expression we are considering is not exhausted, however, by the idea of a bare incarnation, or His becoming man. That, of course, lies at the foundation of the whole; but there is a further thought, which cannot be excluded. The statement that He was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, implies that between Him and other men no perceptible difference could be traced; that as to personal appearance, in weakness and exhaustion, in infirmity and weariness, in sorrow and mortality, He was in all respects made like unto His brethren. The language intimates that He entered into the human family poor and despised, hungry and thirsty, subject to the ordinary toils of labor in an earthly calling, and to the fatigue consequent upon it; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; not exempt from the fear of death nor from actual mortality. In short, He came within the circle of humanity, and into all that this entailed, so far as it could be experienced by One who was at once sinless man and the beloved Son of God. But several observations are here necessary to put this matter in its proper light, which is rarely, if ever, expounded with all the fullness and precision which are necessary.

a. We are not to consider the Lord as assuming this likeness to the flesh of sin in a mere arbitrary way, and without sufficient cause. It is not enough to say that He assumed this likeness to fallen humanity for no reason at all, or merely for the purpose of being like His brethren. Though His participation in our nature, in its sufferings and temptations, qualified Him to sympathize with us, and fitted Him to be a merciful and faithful High Priest (Heb. 2:17), we are not warranted to conclude that this was all the reason for which He was sent
in the likeness of sinful flesh. He was found in fashion as a man, and in the likeness of a sinful man, so that no difference could be discovered between His flesh, which was sinless, and that of other men, who are sinful.

b. We are not to regard the Lord as deriving those sinless infirmities by transmission from Adam or from His mother by the necessity of nature. They were by no means an inevitable accompaniment of the incarnation, or of wearing our humanity. Mortality, which some suppose to be all that is meant by the phrase under consideration, was not a necessary adjunct of assuming our humanity, any more than were the heaviness and agony, the sorrows and fainting, the tears, trials, and temptations, by which He was made like unto His brethren. They could not come upon Him in any other way than sin came upon Him. They came upon Him, not as a personal legacy by derivation or transmission from the first man, or from the fact of His entering into our world, but simply on the ground of His voluntary Suretyship. They were in His case the consequences and effects of sin, but of sin not His own, and merely borne by imputation. In other words, He was the curse–bearer because He was the sin–bearer.

c. We cannot suppose that Christ became sin for us through the mere fact of His mortality, or that He assumed fallen flesh in order to do away with sin by overcoming the corruption of mortality to which sin belongs. From this it would follow that the mortality and sorrows, the temptations and trials to which He was subjected, fell upon Him by the necessity of nature not by substitution or voluntary Suretyship. That supposition subverts the very principle of substitution, which takes for granted that a sinless person, with a complete exemption from sin and all its consequences, spontaneously entered into the position and responsibilities of the sinner. The crude theory to which we have referred, is contradicted by the entire provisions and arrangements of the incarnation. The Lord Jesus never was in Adam’s covenant, but came as the second Adam, the counterpart of the first; and His entrance into humanity by the supernatural
conception, was meant to obviate the amputation of Adam’s first sin, as well as the transmission of any of its consequences by the necessity of nature. He was PERSONALLY exempt, both as the incarnate Son and as the second man, from all the guilt, as well as from all the consequences connected with the guilt, of the first Adam. He was within the human family as a kinsman–Redeemer, and not outside its pale; but that was all which His incarnation as such, or simply considered, properly involved. To suppose that sin, or any of its consequences, attached to the person of the Lord by the fact of assuming our humanity or entering into human life, is a lamentable confusion of idea. It perplexes and disorganizes everything; it confounds things that differ.

The personal and the official in the life of Jesus must always be distinguished. These can never be merged in each other, without the most mischievous and fatal issues. The personal relation is one thing, the official is another. The former brings Christ before us as a divine person, and calls attention to a sinless humanity,—that is, to a humanity according to its idea or normal condition; and if the mediation on which He entered had not involved the propitiation for sin as well as the obedience originally devolved on man as man, the Lord Jesus would doubtless have appeared in a noble humanity, in the same humanity, at least, as that which Adam possessed before the fall. But this could not be on account of the problem to be solved. At present, all I wish is to show that, in our conceptions, the personal must be distinguished from the official. The personal relation of Jesus possessed a full immunity from the imputation of guilt, and from inherent taint in every form. The personal underlies the official; and if we should suppose that sin attached in any sense to the person of the Lord, or to the human life in which He came, He would have been incapacitated for His work of mediation and vicarious obedience. There could have been no substitution in our room and stead.

This will enable us to understand the words, “in the likeness of sinful flesh.” The expression points to the effects of which sin was the cause, but sin not His own. The consequences resulting from the imputation of sin
to Jesus were such, that He was in all points made like the brethren, or sent in the likeness of the flesh of sin; that is, subject to suffering and mortality, as if there had been no difference between mankind and Him. And when we call to mind what we have elsewhere proved, that He was the sin–bearer from the moment of assuming our humanity, we have at hand a ready explanation of the otherwise inexplicable fact, that He came among men as if He were one of them, exposed to sorrow and temptation, suffering and death. His human nature never existed apart from personal union to the Son of God, nor apart from sin–bearing; and hence He appeared in the likeness of the flesh of sin, not by a mere arbitrary assimilation to us men, but because He bore in His own body the weight of imputed sin; a fact which gave rise by legitimate consequence to such results.

The apostle states that God, in preparing a body for Christ, sent Him in a humanity, not such as it was in a state of integrity, when it was beautiful and glorious, but in a form such as it now is, viz., as bearing the sad marks of sin. Thus no perceptible difference appeared between His nature and ours, not because precisely the same flesh was transmitted to Him that goes down from Adam to his posterity, but because He took upon Him, by voluntary Suretyship, that load of imputed guilt, which carried in its penal consequences all that He endured of abasement and heaviness, temptation, suffering, and mortality. It was still, however, officially assumed, not personally inherited. It was sin not His own; and it was a humiliation and a cruel crucifixion to which He submitted, not because He must, but because He was pleased so to do. In a word, He was so like the flesh of sin when found in fashion as a man, so tempted in all points like as we are, that no difference was perceptible to any eye. That humanity so abased, and suffering from the effects of sin, must have been a vast humiliation for such a person, may easily be supposed. Yet God sent His Son to wear humanity in such a form; and the reason of all this is immediately subjoined, as we have next to notice.
4. The words, FOR SIN, or, more correctly, SIN–OFFERING, connected with the words on which we have been commenting, convey this meaning, that He came in the likeness of sinful flesh because He was a sin–offering or a sin–bearer. The first Adam, ushered into a world without sin, was provided with a nobler body. The second Adam, immensely greater than he, came among men from another sphere, and showed Himself in the likeness of the flesh of sin, in meanness and abasement. Some limit the likeness of sinful flesh to this, that He was subject to suffering and death. But while these elements are unquestionably included as important ingredients, they are not all, nor do they exhaust the apostolic idea.

The expression, FOR SIN, is by some regarded as denoting that Christ was cruelly put to death, or treated with sinful malice and insult. But such a comment cannot be made even exegetically plausible; the words will not bear it. Another comment is to the effect that He was sent on account of sin, as the cause which weighed with God to send Him. The meaning, on this supposition, will be, that God intended to punish sin by means of Christ; and but for such a design, it might have been thought that He was visited with suffering without sufficient cause. This is a tenable comment. But of all the interpretations, by far the most natural is the mode of construing which refers the words to the sin–offering, or to an atoning sacrifice. In confirmation of this, we find the phrase so used in the Epistle to the Hebrews 33( Heb. 10:6 ), and in the Septuagint version of Isaiah, where Christ’s soul is said to be given as an offering for sin ( Isa. 53:10 ), as well as in many other places in the same version ( Lev.4:35, 5:6, 6:17 ). The sense will be as follows:—By such a sacrifice for sin, the sacrifice of His own body, though He owed nothing, and was under no liability, He condemned sin in the flesh. As Christ is elsewhere directly and by implication called a sacrifice, I do not see that there ought to be any doubt whether this is the meaning of the Pauline expression. Besides, on this explanation, everything will be found to fall into proper order in the structure of the sentence, without any ellipsis or any word to be supplied: it will be construed with what precedes, not with what follows. The only objection that can be made to this
interpretation is, that the passage does not make mention of Christ’s death, tent of His mission. But there can be no objection on that ground for we often find similar phrases in connection with the propitiation of Christ, the sending being for the sake of the death, and comprehending it (1 John 4:9–10). We hold, then, that the expression denotes a propitiatory sacrifice, a sin–offering.

5. But it is added, that by this means God CONDEMNED SIN IN THE FLESH. To apprehend the meaning of this phrase, it must be noticed that sin is still personified, as it was in the three previous chapters. The apostle speaks of sin entering into the world, and reigning over the human family as a potence, monarch, or cruel master (Rom. 5:12, 17), and as exercising an authority, from which we are legitimately rescued only by a death to sin (Rom. 6:2). The reason of this peculiar phraseology may be, that a distinction can be drawn between the man and the sin which enslaves him; God condemning the man, not as His workmanship, but as he has sin. Sin destroys the person, and being therefore much like a person, is capable of being personified. From the passage where he first spoke of its entrance (5:12), up to this point, the apostle has been personifying sin; and hence we has no warrant to take the word SIN in any other acceptation in the passage before us. We must still regard SIN in this passage as the potentate that has held the human family under his power. But when Christ was sent by the Father to engage with this enemy, He overcame him, judged, and condemned him.

But we have next to notice how God CONDEMNED SIN. The same personification as was before used, is still continued. Sin is spoken of as a person Judged at a higher tribunal, and righteously condemned. In consequence of this, he has no further claim to those over whom he had previously tyrannized, for they are now set free. No other signification can be attached to the word CONDEMNED but such as is identical with the meaning of the word in the first clause of the chapter; for the no which believers enjoy, is based on the
condemnation of sin, which was accomplished in the flesh of Christ.

The question, indeed, as to the flesh, in which sin is said to have been condemned, is variously answered by different interpreters. But the connection decides that the allusion is to the human flesh assumed by Christ; that is, to the same person of whom he had said that He was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh. The apostle plainly refers to the flesh of Christ, and intimates that God condemned sin on Him as the sinless sin–offering. He satisfied the divine claims, partly by His perfect obedience,—that is, by what the Son of God, as sent into the world, rendered in our room,—partly by bearing the curse of the law,—in a word, by SINLESS SIN–BEARING; which may be taken as the descriptive formula for the atonement. And in consequence of this vicarious work, sin was condemned in His flesh, and lost its power over us.

But there are two ways in which this allusion to the condemnation of sin has been expounded. Some less accurately explain the expression in a more subjective sense, viz. of abolishing, or eradicating sin. 34 That cannot be accepted as the meaning of the word, which has always a judicial idea. Hence, others more happily take the term in its proper meaning, as denoting that God judicially condemned sin in the flesh of Christ, when He offered Himself as a sin–offering. The term, wherever we find it, intimates a judicial sentence ( Rom. 2:1 , 5:18 ). In short, it is a condemnation that frees us from condemnation, the sentence being executed on our Surety ( Gal. 3:13 ; 1 Pet. 2:24 ). The language denotes that Jesus was visited with penal suffering because He appeared before God only in the guise of our accumulated sin; not therefore as a private individual, but as a representative, sinless in Himself, but sin–covered, loved as the Son, but condemned as the sinbearer, in virtue of that federal union between Him and His people, which lay at the foundation of the whole. Thus God condemned sin in His flesh, and in consequence of this there is no condemnation to us.
6. The last point to be mentioned is, that Christ was made the sin–offering and condemned sin in the flesh, for this further object, THAT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS THE LAW MIGHT BE FULFILLED IN US. That is so like another expression of the same apostle, that the two passages may fitly be compared for mutual elucidation ( 2 Cor. 5:21 ). This expression cannot be referred to any inward work of renovation; for no work or attainment of ours can with any propriety of language be designated a “fulfilling of the righteousness of the law.” The words, “the righteousness of the law,” are descriptive of Christ’s obedience as the work of one for many ( Rom. 5:18 ). This result is delineated as the end contemplated by Christ’s incarnation and atonement, and intimates that as He was made a sin–offering, so are we regarded as fullfillers of the law. The one was with a view to the other ( iJna ) And when the righteousness of the law is said to be fulfilled IN us, the meaning is that it belongs to us, and is applied to us in consequence of that union by which Christ abides in us, and we in Him. 36 It is fulfilled in us, as if we had done it all ourselves.

VII. Another passage on the atonement is to this effect: If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us (Rom. 8:31–34 ). Here the apostle extols the privileges of those who are completely freed from condemnation by the atonement. And when we analyze these triumphant questions, which follow each other in rapid succession, we perceive that the atonement is a real transaction, furnishing the fullest security for real persons. Beholding enemies and opposition on every side, the apostle confidently defies them, on the ground that God is for us ( ver. 31 ). But that challenge is based upon another statement which connects the Christian’s safety with the atonement ( ver. 32 ).
Before entering on the explanation of the clauses, it is necessary to define the import of the words, His own Soul. These words carry with them the idea of a proper Son, of a Son according to divine relationship prior to His incarnation; and every one who reads the words without prepossession, and with a simple desire to find out the meaning of the writer, is naturally led to refer them to the divine Sonship. The apostle’s expression is intended to bring out two things: on the one hand, the strong love–relation which the Father occupied to the person of the Mediator; and, on the other hand, the infinite dignity and value attaching to whatever was done by the Son of His love. Furthermore, to apprehend the thought here brought before us, and how the Son is said to be delivered, it must be noted that we cannot suppose the three divine persons in the Godhead without any natural order of being, of willing, and of working; for the Father is said to have given the Son, and evinced His infinite love by giving Him. We cannot suppose that the second person assumed our nature merely by compact or agreement, without any relation of natural order; for such a notion would be out of harmony with the entire language of Scripture, which always represents the Father as sending His Son, or the first person as giving the second. 

37 The love to sinners discovered in redemption is thus seen in its first origin in the Father.

Next, the scope of the apostle’s argument, and the nature of it, must be distinctly traced. It is an argument from the greater to the less; the same style of reasoning of which we have already had some striking examples in this epistle (Rom. 5:9, 10). The argument is, that He who gave the greater, will certainly give the less; that He whose love surmounts the greatest difficulties, will not be baffled by what comparatively is much less arduous. And He amplifies the infinite love of God to make the cogency of the reasoning the stronger and more forcible. When God gave His Son FOR US, the expression undoubtedly means that He gave Him for our good, for our advantage. But the inquiry still remains: In what sense, and with what peculiar force, are we to understand that the death of Christ was for our good? Was it so by example, doctrine, or instruction? or was it because He died a vicarious death when we should have died,—a punishment in the place of those who must otherwise
have perished? That is a point to be decided by other elements and expressions that enter into the description of His death; and they have already been under our examination in other passages. The giving up of the Son of God, here referred to, certainly does not mean for our benefit, in a vague and indefinite sense; for the inference deduced from it, that all things will be conferred along with Christ, plainly refers to the idea of substitution. Did not many pious men in the Jewish nation give themselves for the good of their countrymen? Were not many prophets and righteous men slain? But of whom was it ever said that their sufferings were the means of all other blessings that were conferred on others? On the contrary, the blood of Abel and of all the martyrs rather cried for vengeance. But here it is said that WITH CHRIST CRUCIFIED all good things were conferred.

In this passage there is first a statement of fact, and then an argument founded upon it. It is the statement of fact exhibiting the source, nature, and scope of the atonement, with which we have to do. The great argument practically deduced from it, supplies an inexhaustible ground of confidence and expectation.

1. The first thing in the statement of fact is: “God SPARED NOT His own Son.” This expression occurs several times in the New Testament with an allusion to punishment. Thus it is said of the Jews, that God spared not the natural branches (Rom. 11:21); of the angels that sinned, that God spared them not, but cast them down to hell (2 Pet. 2:4); and of the old world, that God spared not the old world, but saved Noah (2 Pet. 2:5). This expression means that the Father did not withhold the divine wrath of punishment from the Son; although He was eternally loved, He was also the sinless fulfiller of the law as man’s surety.

The words here used seem intended to recall the human analogy in the case of Abraham, and certainly suggest that it was a sort of violence to the Father–love of
God when He spared Him not. What does this presuppose? It assumes that He would have spared His Son had He wished to execute upon us the punishment we had incurred. He would have spared His Son, and removed the cup of suffering from Him, had He not purposed to confer upon us all conceivable good. But, in love to us, He spared not His own Son. He removed not the cup from Him, that it might never be presented to us.

The second thing in the statement of fact is: “God DELIVERED 39 UP His Son.” This is not precisely synonymous with the former, nor quite the same as the expression, “He gave His only–begotten Son,” (John 3:16); at least there is a shade of difference. In the phrase before us, there is the further idea that the supreme God delivered Him into the hands of men, to be treated as if in reality He were the malefactor which they represented Him to be. This delivery into the hands of sinners has already been explained by us (Acts 2:23). Judas and the high priest, with the council, were concerned in it; but there was a hand above theirs, and there is nothing to prevent us seeing a principal and an instrumental cause. The unworthy instruments of this delivery only sought to gratify their malice; the just Judge acted righteously. Christ was tried and sentenced at a human tribunal, which was but the visible foreground of an invisible trial in which the righteous God was judging righteously, for human guilt was laid upon the person of the Substitute. For wise reasons, already noticed, God arranged the events of the atoning sacrifice in such a way that Christ was not to be cut off by the immediate hand of God, but by men who were His hand, and only gratified their malice against the representative of God. The human judge, who in the most unprecedented way absolved and yet condemned, declared Him faultless and yet passed sentence against Him, represented in the transaction the Judge of all the earth, who regarded Christ in a similar way. The human judge could only pass a sentence that would affect His body; but another sentence from a higher tribunal took effect upon His soul, and brought home the wrath of God. And under this invisible infliction the Lord experienced agony and desertion; under this He poured forth His complaint, His strong crying and tears, and endured that penal death which rescues us from the second death.
A further statement is, that the Son of God was delivered Up FOR US ALL. As we have already noticed the substitution underlying the passage, we do not need to return to this, and only further inquire for whom all this was done. They are special persons; but the apostle does not say for all, but for US ALL. And when we ask who they were, the obvious answer is, that they were the believing men to whom Paul wrote, and who were joined with himself. They are the same persons in reference to whom the apostle said, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” They are the same parties who are described all through the epistle, and specially designated in the context as the predestinated, the called and justified; in a word, they are the true church of God, for whom Christ died. It cannot be said that God is FOR ALL AND EVERY ONE, since there are many who are without reconciliation, and have Him not as a protector and defender. 40

2. If such is the statement of fact, the argument based upon it is in the highest degree important. It is a form of reasoning from the greater to the less—from the stupendous act of God in delivering up His Son, to the lesser blessings which go along with it and are appended to it,—thus: He who gave the greater, will not grudge or withhold the less. The passage, too, takes for granted that the death of Christ altered our relation, making us, of enemies, the friends of God and the objects of divine protection. The argument is: He that did all this for sinners, will not abandon us when friends; He who gave the greater, will not grudge the less.

The only point further demanding notice is furnished by the striking antithesis: “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again” ( ver. 34 ). This challenge as to its import gives a thought of the same kind with what was considered above at the commencement of this chapter ( Rom. 8:1 , 3 ). The non–condemnation of the elect—that is, of every one for whom Christ died—is here affirmed in the most emphatic way by this triumphant challenge. The justice of God was satisfied for them; and the challenge is: Who can condemn one for whom He died? In a word, everything concurs to proclaim aloud
the vicarious death of Christ for our redemption, and none can condemn them.

VIII. Other allusions to the atonement, though more indirect and less express in statement, occur in the Epistle to the Romans. Thus the apostle refers to the connection between the purchase of a people and Christ’s dominion over them when he says, “For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living” (Rom. 14:9). The special reference of the atonement, too, comes to light emphatically in the descriptive name for a Christian, “one for whom Christ died” (Rom. 14:15). Another passage may be noticed, containing a quotation from a Messianic psalm: “The reproaches of them that reproached Thee fell upon me,” (Rom. 15:4; Ps. 69:9). The words contain an allusion to the atonement, from which the ethical precept is enforced, as in many other passages (2 Cor. 8:9). It is not enough to say with some that the words describe Christ as deeply affected, from the zeal animating Him, with reproaches cast upon God; nor to say that, from the intimate fellowship between Him and the Father, He endured all that was cast on the Father. Nor do the words set forth the punishment of blasphemers pronounced on Christ. They rather intimate that sins, bringing dishonour upon God, were in their guilt laid on the Lord Jesus, or so imputed to Him that He bore them in His own body, as if He were guilty and men were innocent. Hence He did not please Himself; and from this the apostle enforces conformity to His example (comp. 1 Pet. 3:18).

Section 4.—The Testimony in the First
Epistle to the Corinthians.

During Paul’s three years, residence at Ephesus, he learned that doctrinal and practical corruptions, calling for prompt correction, had crept into the recently founded church of Corinth, and he sent from Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:8) his first epistle, containing a solemn warning, and a call for the immediate exercise of discipline (1 Cor. 5:1–5). Peculiar corrections of various kinds were needed to bring back the disciples to their true position; and in dealing with these abuses, the apostle takes occasion to exhibit the bearings of the atonement in a great variety of lights applicable to their religious condition. He places these corruptions one by one in the light of Christ’s redemption–work, and refutes them from that central truth.

I. When party–spirit and undue attachment to the individual peculiarities or gifts of human teachers were to be corrected, the apostle exhibits the absurdity and self–contradiction of indulging this spirit in the following way: Was Paul crucified for You? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? (1 Cor. 1:13.) He shows the Corinthians that this was a tendency at once incongruous and misplaced in Christianity, because they did not owe their redemption to the ministers by whom they believed; that only One was the true master; and that His unique authority, to which too much deference could never be paid, was based on His redemption–work. Nothing more convincingly shows that the atonement was in its nature different from a martyr’s testimony, and from all mere example or instruction, however this might be confirmed by exposure to peril, or by actually...
sealing the testimony with blood.

The phraseology here used, shows that the meaning conveyed by the expression, CHRIST WAS CRUCIFIED FOR US, is, that He satisfied divine justice in our stead. As an illustration, the apostle spoke of one man dying for another who was a righteous or good man (Rom. 5:7) Yet, when Christ is said to have been crucified for us, the meaning is, that He by substitution bore our sins, and brought in eternal redemption. This question, Was Paul CRUCIFIED FOR YOU? contrasting Paul’s work with Christ’s shows that Christ’s death was for a wholly different end than can be competently applied to one man’s act for another. We may be required to put life to hazard for the brethren, and to fill up what is behind of the sufferings of Christ (2 Tim. 2:10; Col. 1:24); but in what sense? Not as dying for their sins, but to confirm the truth of the gospel, and edify the church by a spectacle of steadfastness and constancy; for the Christian rather suffers, than exposes the church to danger. But between sufferings belonging to confessors for the truth, and vicarious sufferings as a propitiation for sins, there is a world-wide distinction. 43 There may be a certain similarity, but no identity, no equality. The expression, “crucified for us,” intimates something unique and incommunicable, belonging to the work performed by Him who was the one Mediator between God and man. That substitution was competent to Him alone: He redeemed us from eternal death, and the curse of the law. When believers suffer in Christ’s cause, this is a filling up of what is behind of His buffetings from the hand of man, or the fury of Satan stirring up human instruments against those who are engaged in spreading His cause. But the question, “Was Paul crucified for you?” intimates by contrast, that as to His atoning work, Christ’s sufferings were unique, vicarious, and incommunicable.

II. The apostle places in the light of the atonement another aberration of the Corinthian church,—the undue admiration of human eloquence, or the wisdom of words: For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach.
the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God (1 Cor. 1:17, 18). Two points are here brought out in connection with the atonement: the simplicity which Paul used in preaching it; and the fact that the preaching of it is the power of God.

(1.) The reason for simplicity and abstaining from the wisdom of words was, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. Paul neither gratified the Greek passion for eloquence, nor threw into his preaching any powerful rhetoric at his command, and of which these epistles contain several striking examples (1 Cor. 15); and this he did, lest the gospel should lose its power, lest men should turn their attention from the cross to the words in which it was presented. He did not call in the aid of human philosophy, or the wisdom of words, to make an impression for the gospel, well aware that foreign matter or rhetorical refinement was only subversive of its efficacy, and that it was sufficiently powerful of itself to bring conviction and peace to a human conscience. He abstained from the wisdom of words, lest men should undervalue it, as if it had not power to touch a human heart, but needed eloquence to induce men to receive it. The honour would thus be given to the art, and not to the matter. 44

(2.) The preaching of the cross was the power of God. This remarkable statement is put alongside of another—that it is to them that perish foolishness. The wise among the Corinthians—that is, philosophic minds attached to some of the famous schools of philosophy—held it was folly to represent the Son of God as dying on the cross; while to the Jews the cross was an offense, because it was, as they thought, incompatible with the pictures of the Messiah’s everlasting reign given in the prophets. Paul declares, notwithstanding all this Gentile and Jewish resistance, that he was determined to know nothing and to preach nothing but a suffering Messiah, exalted indeed to universal dominion, but whose kingdom was based upon His cross.
The preaching, of the cross was called the power of God, because the announcement of Christ’s atoning death, in its full outline, brought divine power upon the scene, the renewing of man’s nature, the restoration of the divine image once possessed in paradise. The power here mentioned refers not to miraculous accompaniments of the gospel, nor to the omnipotence which brought about the fact of the atonement, but to the power of God displayed in converting and regenerating men where the cross was preached. The gospel continues to be the power of God as the instrument by which men dead in sin are raised to spiritual life. An almighty, supernatural power goes along with the word; but with what word, with what message? With the preaching of that cross, which was and still is, to so many foolishness. This result is found to follow wherever preaching is connected with the GREAT FACTS OF CHRIST’S ABASEMENT AND ATONING SACRIFICE, as the provision of divine love for the guilty. 45 But only that gospel is the power of God which proclaims that the cross was the propitiation for sin, the sole ground of pardon. The proclamation of these great facts continues to produce, as it has always done, transforming results, which are referred to the power of God; for God inhabits that word which is based on the incarnation and the cross. It is the habitation of His power,—it is, as it were, His chariot; all the attributes of God surround it and adorn it (Heb. 4:12); but let anything else be substituted for the cross, and preaching is denuded of its efficacy, and stripped of this power.

III. Another passage in the same context, to correct the same state of mind, is as follows: But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30). The whole section in which these words are found, has Christ crucified for its theme. It is primarily intended to guard the Corinthians from the undue love of human eloquence; it shows that men partake of Christ, not by the wisdom of words, but by the gift of God. Four terms are used to describe what the Christ as crucified becomes to His people,—viz., WISDOM, RIGHTeousNESS,
SANCTIFICATION, and REDEMPTION. The distribution of them has often been too artificial and out of harmony with the context. Thus many regarded them as descriptive of the threefold office of Christ; wisdom being referred to His prophetical office, righteousness to the priestly office, and the two others to the kingly office. 46 That classification—a most unhappy one—proceeds on a mistake of the meaning. The apostle, throughout the context, is describing Christ crucified: he had called Him, a few verses before, the power of God, and the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24); and in the verses immediately after this passage he declares the determination on which he had acted,—to know nothing among them save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2). Certainty, Christ crucified is the theme to which the four terms refer, and this suffices without more formal distribution. 47 The entire passage thus refers to the priestly office of Christ, or to the benefits derived from His cross.

(1.) Christ was made 48 to us WISDOM. The meaning is, that He was the objective wisdom, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; and that He was so, as the Christ crucified. First the constitution of His person, and next His finished work, peculiarly adapted to meet the wants of man, and to harmonize the attributes of God in man’s redemption, discover unsearchable wisdom. Christ crucified was the objective wisdom of God; and the apostle, in dilating on the theme, felt that, though it was disrelished by those who boasted of Greek culture, and an offense to the Jew, he was speaking wisdom among them that were perfect.

(2.) Christ was made to us RIGHTEOUSNESS. The previous elucidation of this term enables us to dispense with many remarks. Two things were necessary. On the one hand, we needed to be saved from the guilt of violating the divine law, and from treason against the Divine Majesty; and the righteousness indispensably necessary was found in the second Adam, who subjected Himself to our guilt, and transferred it to His innocent head. He made it His own by suretyship, confessing
it in the name of all for whom He appeared, accounting for it to divine justice, submitting to the penalty, and drinking to the dregs the bitter cup filled with the curse of a broken law. We equally needed, on the other hand, His active obedience, which fulfilled the divine law, and brought in an everdying righteousness. And the Lord Jesus DID BOTH FOR us. He transferred our sins to Himself as if they were His own, and laid His merits to our account, as if we had rendered all His meritorious obedience in our own person. And to make all this available to countless millions, who were to stand in Him as mediator, surety, and kinsman, He was at once very man and very God.

(3.) Christ was made to us SANCTIFICATION. This term is closely connected with the former by two Greek particles, which show that it is of the same nature, class, and order with the former. Hence it is evident that we must take the term in the only sense in which it can apply to Christ crucified, in the objective acceptation, for that which Christ has been made to us on the ground of His atoning sacrifice, viz. the introducer of sinners to God, the foundation of priestly privilege, the Author of their worship and boldness of approach. The same thought is brought out in the Lord’s words, when He announced that He sanctified Himself for the sake of His disciples that they might be sanctified (John 17:19); and in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where it is said, “Both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one” (Heb. 2:11). We must go back to the Jewish worshipers, and the severe prohibition against coming before God if not purified according to the preparation of the sanctuary; for persons defiled were without access, and debarred from fellowship with Jehovah and other worshipers. But, when sprinkled by the blood of sacrifices, they were readmitted to the worship. They were then a holy people. The blood of sacrifice was their sole ground of access. Even so, by means of the one ever valid sacrifice of Calvary, sinners excluded on account of sin have access in worship and boldness to approach a holy God. In that sense Christ crucified was made of God to us sanctification.
(4.) Christ was made of God to us REDEMPTION. The term is to be taken here in the strict sense, denoting that Christ was our objective redemption, who has bought us with a price. It means that He was, in His own person, our Redeemer and redemption. We shall not enlarge on this word, as it occurs again and again in different connections. It may here suffice to say that Christ is viewed as the objective ground of our deliverance from captivity by a valid ransom, and that His active and passive obedience redeemed His people from the penal consequences of their sins. Though many expositors prefer to take this term in the wide sense as referring to final deliverance at the resurrection, that is out of keeping with the context, which refers to Christ crucified. Besides, that acceptation requires some other terms to warrant it (Rom. 23; Eph. 4:30).

IV. The church is directed to purge out the leaven of sin by the consideration that Christ, our PASSOVER, was an atoning sacrifice: Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (1 Cor. 5:7, 8). The whole matter is put in an Old Testament guise: the New Testament times are compared with the Passover feast, the Redeemer with the paschal lamb, the purification of the houses from every particle of leaven with the outward and inward holiness of the Christian church. The entire New Testament age, or, more strictly, the entire life of a Christian, is to be nothing else than a keeping of the feast of redemption, in the same way as the Passover was the feast of deliverance from Egypt. Christ is presented to us as the antitype of the paschal lamb, and all is traced to His vicarious sacrifice. In noticing this peculiar phrase, SACRIFICED FOR US, it is to be observed that we have not only a distinct allusion to the fact that Christ was sacrificed in the only sense in which a victim could be offered,—that is, as a perfect lamb, and by divine appointment,—but that it was a transaction which, from the nature of the case, involved substitution. When it was FOR US, the import is, that it was for our benefit, but only so because, according to the nature of the transaction, it was in our room and stead. Christ, by His death, was our deliverance, the true Paschal
Lamb slain for us; an expression never used of any merely human teacher or benefactor. If applied to a Paul or Peter, who bore much and suffered much for the church, it would be felt to be in the highest degree incongruous and absurd. It can be used only of a sin–hearing substitute.

The apostle’s words plainly take for granted that the Passover was a proper sacrifice, and hence it is called the sacrifice of the Lord’s Passover (Ex.12:27). It was not a mere symbol of deliverance from Egypt, though connected with their captivity and freedom, but pointed to something special: it lay at the foundation of the separate standing of Israel and of their economy. The sprinkling of the blood on the lintels and door–posts preserved their first–born from the destroying angel on that night of woe to Egypt. The lamb was the sin; the worshipper, confessing guilt, and acknowledging that no personal innocence of his exempted him from the merited infliction of that divine wrath which the adjoining families experienced, ascribed all to divine grace and to the divinely–appointed Passover. It must specially be noticed that paschal blood effected the church’s separation from the world, and made Israel a kingdom of priests. The Passover was the foundation–sacrifice which set apart the nation for God, and made them a holy people. It was the Passover that drew a clear line of demarcation between the church and the world,—the one being under God’s protection, while the other was left under divine wrath. And from age to age it was this sacrifice of the Lord’s Passover that kept up the distinction between Israel and the Gentiles, the church and the world. Israel by this means became a peculiar people, a holy nation. They came out and were separate, much in the same way, though with a marked complezional or national variety, as the church of God still stands apart from the world and was redeemed for this end.

But what were the later celebrations of the Passover—the repetitions of it in subsequent times? Were they merely commemorative? They were much more. 51 The subsequent repetitions of the Passover were also
sacrificial, and not a mere memorial, as appears from the language used respecting it as a standing institution in Israel (Ex. 34:25). The offering of it as the Lord’s sacrifice, and the taking of the blood to the altar, prove it not to have been a mere commemoration of a past fact in Egypt. Its annual effect was to continue what had been begun—to keep Israel what they had been appointed to be, the people of God. The repetition only repeated His redeeming act. God was considered as sparing Israel anew from the avenging angel, redeeming them from bondage, and renewing their fellowship with Himself, till the true Passover came that accomplished the types, and terminated them for ever. The annual celebration of the Passover preserved Israel to be the people of God, for the first paschal sacrifice was only the first of the series. We may illustrate the first and the subsequent Passovers by the analogy of creation and preservation. The latter is a work of God no less than the former, the continuation of what was once begun, but not less requiring the present agency of God. And so important was the Passover to Israel, the covenant people, that it not only made them a separate, peculiar, and holy nation, but gave significance to all the other sin–offerings. No Jew might neglect it, and no stranger had a part in it.

From this realization of the type in Christ crucified the apostle deduces two things.

1. The Christian church in general, and every individual believer, are exhorted to keep the feast (ver. 8), and to keep it, not once a year, but constantly. Our entire life is to be the keeping of a redemption festival, the reality of which the deliverance from Egypt was but a type. All our life, nay, the entire period of the Christian church on earth, must be festival days,—days of pleasantness and joy, because of the magnitude of those blessings which the atonement conferred on us; for the Son of God was sacrificed that we might keep the feast perpetually, and with festive joy. 52
2. They ought to purge out the old leaven (ver. 7), that is, have no old leaven of malice and wickedness in the celebration of the feast (ver. 8). The apostle interprets the meaning of this arrangement, and exhorts the Corinthian church to the observance of it: to labor for sincerity and unfeigned purity, external and internal, to evince their redemption and separation from the world by a holy and blameless life. The image is peculiarly adapted to the matter which the apostle was enforcing—the holiness, internal and external, of the New Testament church.

V. Some licentious practices had crept into the Corinthian church demanding immediate correction; and it deserves notice that the apostle puts them in the light of Christ’s atonement, exposing their balefulness as inconsistent with the position of redeemed men: What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). Three things are contained in this memorable passage, which is of the greatest value on the doctrine of the atonement:

(1) The privilege that Christians are the temple of the Holy Ghost, and not unoccupied;

(2) they are bought to be another’s, and are not their own;

(3) the fact of being bought supplies the most powerful motive for glorifying God. These three apostolic thoughts are thus put together as an argument: A Christian may not surrender himself to impurity, for this reason, that he has become the property of a new master, and is moreover under the influence of a new motive, prompting him to dedicate his life to a holy service. As our task, however, is to develop the doctrine of the atonement, we limit our attention to the scope at which we aim.
The apostle, in setting forth that we are not our own, announces that we are BOUGHT, and bought with a PRICE (timh). Though we do not expressly find here the terms ransom and redemption, beyond question the same thought is presented to our minds. The several apostles, as we shall see, with the most perfect uniformity of teaching, compare our deliverance from guilt to a slave’s deliverance from bondage by the payment of a costly price. The underlying thought is captivity, or a state of slavery, under which we are viewed as held; and five distinct ideas are unfolded in the apostles, phraseology wherever they touch this theme,—viz. the captive, the holder of the captive, the Redeemer, the price, the receiver of the price. But it is asked, Why was it not an absolute deliverance, when divine love was engaged in this great transaction? Why did not the God of love simply pronounce our liberation, without a ransom? No absolute deliverance of this nature is ever alluded to in Scripture. Nor was a liberation possible without a price or ransom, in consequence of the fact of sin, against which all the divine perfections were arrayed. The unspotted holiness, the inflexible justice and faithfulness of God, as well as the inviolable authority of His law, rendered the liberation of guilty men without a ransom simply impossible.

When mention is made of a price, and of Christians as bought with a price, the terms plainly enough display the nature, intention, and scope of Christ’s death (comp. Apoc. v.9). The Lord’s delivery to death was the price by which we were bought. The allusion is to the well-known prevalent custom of classical times, with which the apostle was familiar, by which, on the payment of a price, a slave passed out of the hands of one master into the service of another. The apostle applies the same style to the Christian’s deliverance, or redemption from one service to another. He does not here speak of purchased blessings, but of purchased MEN. In like manner Paul speaks of the church purchased with the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28). As to the price paid, it is elsewhere sufficiently described, when it is represented as the act of Christ, who gave His life a ransom for many, who gave Himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time (Matt. 20:28; 1 Tim. 2:6). If the death of Christ, or His obedience unto death, was the
price, it must be added that the party bought or purchased are Christians, who in virtue of the ransom pass into another service, and become the property of another owner: “Ye are not your own.”

To invalidate this conclusion, various evasions have been proposed by those who object to the doctrine of Christ’s substitution. Thus, the Socinians were wont to allege that the expression meant no more than absolute deliverance, without the intervention of any price or ransom. And to give the greater colour to this theory, it was alleged that the words mean no more than that we serve Christ, without taking any account of the fact that once we were not Christ’s servants. 54 In a word, they will admit only the metaphorical use of the term. But they cannot prove this. When a word occurs in a proper and in a metaphorical sense, it is obvious that in each case we have to consider which signification is the most natural and admissible. But primarily we must take a term in its proper sense, till we are required on good grounds to admit the figurative sense. Even were we to concede an occasional use of the metaphorical sense of this term by inspired men, it would not follow that in all the passages commonly adduced for redemption by ransom, we are to call in the metaphorical meaning. Besides, there are appended terms which decide the question. We do not argue merely from the words, TO REDEEM, TO BUY but take in as further proof the subjoined terms, “ransom)” “the precious blood of Christ,” and the like, which amply prove, if anything can, that the deliverance was not simple or absolute, but on the ground of a payment made in our room and stead. In a word, our opinion as to the fact of its being a true and proper redemption is confirmed by texts like the present, which make mention of a price.

The metaphorical interpretation is reduced to nonsense when we realize that we are bought with a PRICE, i.e., Christ’s historical act, and that it then follows that we are not our own.
On this text we must take notice of a new and strange comment offered by certain modern writers, who, with many evangelical sentiments, unhappily deny Christ’s satisfaction, or accounting to divine justice in our stead. Admitting the biblical terms RANSOM and PRICE, they expound them as something not given to God with a view to the satisfaction of His law and justice, but graciously conferred on man, the poor, the naked, and the destitute, from the eternal riches of divine mercy. 55 That theory is propounded by those who will see nothing but love and moral redemption in the atonement; but it is little better than a fallacious use of Scripture terms, denuding them of their significance. With them, redemption means not deliverance from guilt and wrath, but liberation from self–will, and a life of self; and this text is made to mean that Christ gave His precious life merely to liberate us from selfishness, that is, to do a work IN US, but not FOR US. It confounds person and nature, the objective and the subjective, the standing of the man relatively and the inner condition of the heart, and is inconsistent with the language of the text, whether we take account of the words or the reasoning. The apostle affirms that we are not our own, because a price was paid, that we might become the property of another, as in ancient times a slave became another’s property by right of purchase. And it is nothing but an abuse of terms to reduce this to the idea of deliverance from self–will or self–love.

The meaning of the passage will be evident from the following outline. It presupposes captivity: it takes for granted that in our natural condition we were sold under sin, exposed to the curse, subject to Satan, according to the just Judgment of God, and that a ransom was necessary and fully paid; not, indeed, to Satan, who was but the executioner of God’s justice, but to God, our original owner, and the fountain of justice, to whom we are by this means legitimately restored. Though God condones all sin to us, exacting no price AT OUR HANDS, deliverance from captivity was not without an adequate price paid by a Mediator in our stead. We thus pass into the ownership of Him by whom we are redeemed. This, of course, assumes THE DIVINE DIGNITY of the Redeemer; for redemption, to be His property, is competent only to one who is divine. The
redeemed of the Lord, once slaves under a hard tyrant, become the possession of Him who paid their ransom–price.

The practical deduction from this is, that Christians have no warrant or right to use their bodies as they please, because they are the property of Christ, and their members the members of Christ. It may here be added, that we have a twofold security for holiness, objective and subjective—a new proprietorship, and a new motive; and therefore that it is a calumny when the adversaries of grace assert that redemption by an atonement opens a door to licentiousness. 56

VI. Another abuse which had crept into the Corinthian church, was such an undue exercise of Christian liberty as put a stumbling–block in the way of brethren; and it is exposed and corrected by being placed in the light of the atonement: And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? (1 Cor. 8:11.) The same admonition on the same subject we found in another epistle (Rom. 14:15.) The question was as to the eating of things offered in sacrifice to idols, or eating what the Jewish Christians deemed defiling. The freer Gentile Christians felt themselves at liberty to partake without restraint; but evils arose from their reckless use of liberty. They grieved and hurt the consciences of their weaker brethren, by inducing them to take a liberty in which their conscience did not allow them. Hence the apostle’s reproving challenge.

Let us consider our Christian designation, and the ethical principle based upon it.

1. The designation of a Christian is, ONE FOR WHOM CHRIST DIED. This expression occurs in the proper sense, or in an acceptation appropriate to the thing. The sense in which Christ died for a redeemed
man is unique. Though the expression may, in a certain sense, be used to denote what one man does for his fellow-men with a view to be serviceable, especially in propagating the Christian religion, and in founding the Christian church (Acts 15:26; 2 Cor. 12:15), still that is only in a very modified sense. It cannot be denied by any one acquainted with Scripture phraseology, that it was never said of any mortal man who made himself useful to others by toils or endurance, imprisonment, danger, or death, borne for their good, that he suffered or died for them to the extent that Christ is said to have suffered and died for His people. We cannot understand the phrase, as applied to Christ, in the sense that He suffered to give us an example, nor in the vague sense that He suffered by exposing Himself to danger which might or might not actually strike Him. He spontaneously put Himself in our room and stead, to bear sin and encounter certain death as the due punishment of those whose place He occupied. When the apostle reasons on the supposition of what may take place in common life,—that one may by possibility suffer for another in a lower sense,—he gives us to understand how he uses the preposition (Rom. 5:7). As Christ Himself puts the matter, the most important part of the task committed to Him consisted in this, that He laid down His life for the sheep; and He connects with this the additional explanation, that He was neither constrained by inevitable necessity, nor mastered by His enemies’ power. He laid down His life of His own proper motion, as one having power to do so, and at His Father’s command; proceeding, as this command did, on the supposition that He had power to lay it down (John 10:18). A Christian is thus one for whom Christ died.

2. The apostle next adduces a motive for the well-regulated exercise of Christian liberty from the atoning death of Christ. Christian duty in general is enforced by considerations derived from the cross. Understanding the infinite value of the atonement, the Christian has a duty not to use his liberty to offend or trouble others. Misuse of liberty reveals a short-sightedness in regard to the value of Christ’s use of liberty, which He used to die in our place willfully.
Before leaving this passage, it is necessary to answer an Arminian comment. From the expressions here used, a false conclusion has been drawn as to the extent of Christ’s death, and the security of those for whom He died. That is a false deduction springing from a wrong idea of the word “destroy,” which does not here denote eternal destruction. It often means to hurt, to injure—the opposite of that which tends to the use of edifying. The apostle does not mean that one man destroys another; for that is not competent to man, and is the sole prerogative of God, who can destroy soul and body. But one brother may put a stumbling-block in another’s way, and by this means mar his peace, defile his conscience, and occasion weakness, trouble, and sorrow. The apostle does not mean actual perdition, as if any for whom the Savior offered Himself a surety could finally be destroyed. How could they perish finally, when Christ had offered Himself an eternally valid sacrifice, expiating their sin, and satisfying all the claims of the law in their room and stead? (John 6:39.) They are kept not only by power, but by the security furnished by divine justice itself, to the salvation ready to be revealed.

The motive here supplied is, in an ethical point of view, of the strongest and most cogent. The apostle wishes to point out to those uncharitable asserters of liberty, that he whom they respected so little was not so viewed by Christ, but was so tenderly loved that the Lord had not disdained to die for him. He speaks of those who were made Christian brethren by that atoning death, and shows that, from the infinite price paid, we may estimate the value to be set on them. Hence the point of the admonition, not to offend them.

VII. The apostle, while correcting another abuse, in connection with the Lord’s Supper, which had also crept into the Corinthian church takes occasion to expound the meaning of the institution. He points out that it was a memorial of the Lord’s death, and that they who celebrate it show the Lord’s death till He come (1 Cor. 11:23–27). He records the event as he had received it from the Lord Himself; for though some suppose the
words mean that Paul received the account of the institution from the disciples who were present, that is plainly an inadequate commentary on the words. The terms imply, beyond doubt, a special communication, given by the Lord Himself, that Paul, in founding the churches, might act with as much confidence and as certain knowledge as the other apostles. When he adduces the very words of Christ uttered at the institution of the Supper, they are carefully distinguished from his own. Among other things peculiar to the Pauline account of the Supper, may be noticed the words, “This do in remembrance of me.” The verb may be either in the indicative or imperative mood, but far more fitly in the latter, expressive of command. These words are given twice, nearly in the same form, first at the distribution of the bread, next at the giving of the cup; and Luke, as was to be expected from Paul’s companion, also records the words in the same way.

But what did the Lord mean, when He bade the first disciples do this in remembrance of Him? The opponents of the atonement considered as a vicarious sacrifice, say the words merely direct us to remember His salutary doctrine, or His example, or His great commandment to love our fellow-men. That Paul apprehended the words in a different way, is evident from the comment which he gives: he affirms that we show forth, not His doctrines, not His example, but His death as an atoning sacrifice for sin (ver. 26).

Without dwelling on the sacramental elements and actions, let it suffice to say that they point to the one sacrifice of the cross. Thus, when the bread was given, He said, “This is my body,”—alluding to His entire humanity, in respect of the obedience which He rendered to His Father in the room of sinners. When the wine was given, He said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood,”—alluding to the blood of sacrifice, by means of which the new covenant was formed. Though the former may be said to bring before the mind His whole suffering obedience generally, we cannot fail to see that the Supper came in room of the
pass over, and recalled the eating of the Passover. But besides, a new covenant was to come in room of the Sinaitic covenant, and the Lord deemed it fitting to give an emblem of the blood of sacrifice, by means of which those heretofore aliens could be taken into a new covenant, as a holy people, and sit as guests, without danger or dread, at the Lord’s table. They, in a word, by that sacrificial blood entered into a new covenant—standing, no longer shadowy or capable of dissolution, but perfect and inviolable. 57

All this is recalled to memory by the constant celebration of the Supper, intended to be a perpetual institution and frequently repeated. The disciples commemorated His death, not as a thing indifferent, not as a historic incident having no direct bearing on present interests and experience, not as a mere confirmation of His doctrine, but as a true atonement. They were to have a memorial of Christ crucified, and His redeeming love, brought home to them by means of emblems vividly recalling to them the nature of His sacrifice, and furnishing food for the understanding and the heart. When they were directed to show His death till He come,—that is, when the death of Christ was made the ground of festive commemoration,—we see what an important and unique design lay at the foundation of His sufferings and death. These could be no other than vicarious—the actions of a substitute and surety.

The Lord’s Supper, thus replete with significance, has maintained its ground in the church amid all the revolutions of time. The Lord did not leave it to the apostles to institute it after His departure, but regarded it as so important, that by His own authority, while yet present, He instituted it in the most solemn manner on the night of His betrayal, immediately before going out to the garden. The bread and wine, selected as emblems of His body and blood, were designed to imbue His disciples with the persuasion,

(1) that His body was the true paschal sacrifice; and
that His blood was the true sacrificial blood by which the new covenant was constituted, more perfect by far than the covenant at Sinai. The elements were signs of a reality,—pledges in hand, that as surely as they took the sign, they by faith received the thing signified; for they were seals and pledges as well as signs. The covenant is founded simply on the blood shed for many, for the remission of sins, without any other element, whether in the form of intervening merit, or moral improvement, or services to be performed, as the procuring cause. The cup of thanksgiving was thus the participation of the blood of Christ, and the bread the participation of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16).

The sacrament of the Supper loudly proclaims this great truth to all time, and all ages must hear it. Till the Lord come, His atoning death must be proclaimed with festive joy at the Supper, as often as it is deemed proper to celebrate it. Of how great importance must that truth be which Jesus so vividly portrayed, and the perpetual memory of which He so carefully secured! This shows what a rank and place belong to the atonement. It is the principal thing in the gospel; nay, it is the gospel. Take it out of the gospel, and it ceases to be the gospel.

In proceeding to correct another error, which had reference to the resurrection of the body, the apostle takes occasion to describe the gospel which he preached, and to which he continued faithful: For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3, 4). Paul had received the gospel which he preached, not from men, but by particular revelation from the Lord; and it was all based on the cross. The gospel which he had preached from the beginning, which the Corinthians had received, and by which they were saved if they continued faithful to it, was to the effect that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He rose again according to the Scriptures. Can this mean that Christ died for our sins merely in the sense of a moral
redemption is, that is, as freeing us from moral corruption? No. The words mean, that our sins causally put Him to death. But we must more narrowly consider the phraseology.

All depends on the proper import of the expression, DYING FOR OUR SINS. The Greek preposition here used is sometimes found in connection with persons who are the proper object of Christ’s atonement (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 5:7; Rom. 8:32; John 10:11; Rom. 5:6, 7); and in such a connection the expression has the signification of expiation for the good of another, or for his benefit, always presupposing a vicarious atonement. The preposition is also used to denote men’s advantage in connection with the final cause, or the end designed (John 6:51). But when construed with sins, as here, the expression can only mean that His DEATH was the DESERVED PUNISHMENT. We could not from the preposition alone draw the conclusion that the death of Christ was the consequence of our sins, or the punishment of our guilt, were there no further particulars in the passage to lead us to that thought. But when mention is made, as in the passage under consideration, of suffering and death, the meaning unquestionably is, that our sins were the procuring cause of the suffering. The words, beyond doubt, refer to our sins as the meritorious cause of Christ’s death; and the thought expressed is, that the death of Christ was the punishment of sin. Though the preposition of itself has various shades, according to the connection in which it stands, certain it is, that when the death of Christ is put in connection with our sins, the strict meaning can only be, that these sins were the cause of His death, and that the sufferings were the punishment of our guilt.

This will be more evident if we take in another phrase connected with His resurrection: “If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain: ye are yet in your sins” (1 Cor. 15:17). The reason of this connection is not obscure, if we apprehend the suretyship involved in Christ’s death; that He was a public person, or Representative of His people both in His death and in His resurrection; that He died for our sins, in the sense that He, by
imputation or transfer, took them upon Himself, making them His own, and submitting to the consequences they entailed. If Christ had remained in death, it would have been an argument that those sins laid on Him, and spontaneously borne, had not been expiated by His death. Had Christ not risen, we should not have been set free from former sins: they would still have been put to our account. The argument of the apostle amounts to this, that the scope of the atonement, with its validity and efficacy, would all have been neutralized, if the Surety, who went down to death under the sins of His people, had not risen: we should yet be in our sins. When He rose, therefore, it was undeniable evidence that our sins had been expiated by His death (compare \textbf{Rom. 4:25}).

What objection is propounded to all this by the Socinian party? It amounts on philological grounds to this, that the Greek preposition denotes, not the meritorious cause, but the final cause,—that is, that Christ died to remove future sin. But that is not to expound words, but to deposit foreign thoughts in the record; and our function as interpreters is to evolve the meaning of language, not to adapt it to our preconceived ideas. It is one thing to say that Christ died for sins which have already been committed, and the guilt of which must be borne, and another thing to say that He to abolish future sins. The former idea is in Paul’s words: the latter cannot be put into them without altering the record. The expression can mean nothing but the guilt of sin considered as the meritorious cause, or impelling cause, of the Lord’s death. Grotius has well proved that the preposition, thus used, denotes the impelling cause \footnote{\textit{see \textbf{Rom. 15:9} ; \textbf{Eph. 5:20}}.} When it is said, then, that Christ died for our sins, it means that He bore their punishment.

The Socinians will have some words supplied or understood —a device that cannot be endured. To show, however, that it is not simply a matter of interpretation with them, but a foregone conclusion, it may be mentioned that
Socinus explicitly declared, that were the doctrine of vicarious sin–bearing, and the punishment of one for the sins of another, mentioned not once, but many times, in Scripture, he would not believe it, because it could not be. That open declaration is candid at least; but it is an appeal to reason, not to revelation, and an admission that Scripture is not made the ultimate judge, but only to be interpreted as seems best suited to confirm or dress out a preconceived hypothesis.

But taking the divine word as the ultimate authority, we may affirm that no language could more precisely express a meritorious cause than the words of the text. When our sins are connected with Christ’s sufferings and death, the words bring out cause and effect. The words can be taken in no other sense than in that of the impelling or meritorious cause of the effect described. They mean that our sins—that is, the guilt contracted by us—caused the suffering and death of the Lord; and words cannot more accurately express the idea.

**Section 5.—The Second Epistle to the Corinthians.**
The second epistle, written a short time after the first—at least after such an interval as enabled Titus to go to Corinth and to return to Paul—is somewhat different in tone, and alludes to the good EFFECT produced by the admonitions which had been addressed to the Corinthian church. Titus had been sent to learn the impression made by the first epistle, and reported that some of the abuses had been corrected. The party divisions, however, were not suppressed; and Paul was under the necessity of continuing personal explanations, and also vindicating his authority against those who depreciated his commission, in comparison with that of the other apostles who had been trained in the Lord’s society in the days of His flesh. The apostle, in the midst of these personal allusions, takes occasion to interweave several references to the atonement; and to these testimonies we must now come.

I. In referring to activity and labor in the discharge of his office, the apostle declares that he was constrained by his Lord’s atoning love: *For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him, who died for them, and rose again* (2 Cor. 5:14, 15). The intense activity and zeal to which the apostle alluded in the previous verses are traced to their source—the redeeming love of Christ. And this leads him to dwell on the nature of the atonement, which is aright apprehended, according to the meaning of this passage, only when we duly discover the prominent place to be assigned to substitution. This is seen in the clause “one died for all,” even when we render the Greek preposition (ὑπὲρ) FOR THE BENEFIT OF. The idea of substitution, or exchange of places, underlies the thought, as we have noticed already (Rom. 5:7). Besides, substitution or vicariousness comes to light, beyond all question, in the logical deduction, THEN THE ALL DIED; 59 for if all for whom the Lord died are regarded as dying in His death, no doubt can exist as to the fact of substitution: it is taken for granted as an undoubted reality. The apostle speaks of us men exposed to death on our own account, and worthy of condemnation; and to rescue us, a Surety or
Deliverer steps forward, in the exercise of boundless love and dies in our stead. The language involves substitution, and can be understood only on the supposition that one dies in another’s room. We have to understand, in Christ’s case, federal unity and substitution.

1. What does the apostle mean by the word DIE, as thus applied to us? And how are WE said TO HAVE DIED in the Lord’s death? One thing is self–evident: the apostle does not use it in the first clause literally, and in the next clause metaphorically; for, on such a supposition, the deduction made by the apostle would not hold, and the expression would become meaningless. He has before his eye the case of sinners doomed to death for whom a Surety offered Himself vicariously; and only in such a case can they for whom the Surety interposed be said to have satisfied the law or bore the penalty. We take the word in the two clauses in precisely the same sense. It is the same phraseology, with the same import, which we found in the Epistle to the Romans, as descriptive of the ONE REPRESENTATIVE ACT OF CHRIST; which for the most part is set forth as rendered for us, but in a considerable number of passages is also spoken of as if we had personally done it ( Rom. 6:2 ). And the manner in which the two phrases are here alternated is worthy of notice. We may either say that Christ DIED FOR US, Or that WE DIED WITH HIM. And the logical form of the verse explains the principle on which that alternating phraseology proceeds: “IF one died for all, THEN the all died.” From this it is plain that we must take the word DIE, applied to Christ in the one clause, and applied to His people in the other clause, not only in the same sense, but as referring to the same act. The death here mentioned is not twofold, but numerically one; for we are not to regard Christ as performing one act, and ourselves as performing another parallel and similar to His. When we look at the general tenor of the apostle’s doctrine, we find, on the one hand, that death is represented as the wages of sin; and, on the other, we see the great Surety undergoing the penalty in our room: and we are said to have died in Him, because His ACT WAS REPRESENTATIVELY OUR ACT. The atoning death of the Lord, on the ground of federal
unity and substitution, was also our act; that is, was accepted as OUR ACT in Him.

2. The next inquiry has reference to the life into which the Christian enters, and to the connection between the life and the death He died. What was meant by the apostle when speaking of them who live, or of the living ones, as the expression literally means (ver. 15)? No one who apprehends the Pauline phraseology as to the believer’s dying with Christ, or crucifixion with Christ, can doubt that the life which follows is premial life, subsequent to the meritorious obedience which was rendered. It is life following a perfect fulfillment of the divine law, and regarded as its reward. Very generally, expositors take this life as referring to the term of our human existence, or the natural life. But that is wide of the mark. The connection between the atonement and the life immediately subjoined, points, we think, to a causal connection, and thus leaves no doubt that the allusion is to spiritual or eternal life, which is elsewhere described as hid with Christ in God (Col. 3:3). The living ones are such as enter into premial life, because the Surety fulfilled the law, and expiated sin in His death.

But it is intimated that this life is a dedicated life, not a life of self-seeking, after the flesh, or in the prosecution of what tends to our own profit, honor, or gratification. This life was secured by Christ’s death, and promoted by His resurrection: for the concluding clause of the verses above quoted shows that Christ DIED FOR US, and that He rose again. And it is not said that He rose for us, but that He died for us; for there is a certain difference of meaning. The resurrection comes within the sphere of reward, and enabled Him to diffuse His life through His own people, redeemed to be His—for He underwent death with this express end in view, that He might win a people as His property—and replenish them with the divine life which He procured for them, and dispenses according to their needs. He thus induces them to live not to themselves, but to Him.
To return to the expression ONE DIED FOR ALL: no doubt can be entertained, either from the nature of the transaction, or from the logical inference already mentioned, that the phrase denotes the exchange or substitution of one for another. But we have still further to consider in what sense Christ is said to have DIED FOR ALL. Plainly, the allusion in the present case is of equal extent in both clauses. The all for whom He died are the same parties, and no other, who are next said to have died in Him; that is, all who are regarded as expiating sin, and fulfilling the law in Him—the same men to whom the redemption is applied, and no wider circle, at least in the passage under consideration.

It may not be unfitting, before leaving this passage, to refer to two expositions of such expressions which cannot be accepted, and yet are widely diffused,—the Arminian or Lutheran comment, and the Amyraldist comment.

a. As to the Arminian tenet, it is to this effect: that Christ in a certain respect offered Himself a sacrifice sufficiently for all, and for every man in the same sense. They leave it uncertain whether they interpret the preposition as denoting FOR THE GOOD OF ALL, or IN THE ROOM OF ALL. They maintain that it was for all alike, without distinction and without exception. Taking hold of the wider or more general aspects in which some texts appear to present the atonement to the mind, they conclude that Christ was priest and victim for all mankind without exception, whether they believe or not, whether they are saved or not; that the sacrifice of Christ was not only infinitely precious, but offered with such a purpose both on the Father’s side and on the Son’s side, that it should be for all and every man. That this is an unscriptural comment, is evident from the fact that an accepted sacrifice obtained the remission of sins. And Christ dispenses to all for whom He died—that is, to all who become His people—the reward of His obedience, remission, regeneration, and final glory. The clear inference from such a comment would be universalism, or universal salvation, which the Scriptures emphatically repudiate. It will not do to distinguish between
the purchase and the application of redemption, so
as to affirm that they are not of equal extent; for that amounts to disjunction and separation, vitiating the nature of the atonement as a vicarious transaction.

b. The Amyraldist theory, or that of the double reference, acknowledges a true substitution in THE ROOM AND STEAD of those who were given to Christ, and whose sins He actually bore, but asserts, moreover, that He died FOR THE ADVANTAGE OF the rest, though not in their stead. In a word, this theory maintains a double reference; that is, that He died in the room of some, and for the good of the rest. According to this exposition, the biblical phrase, TO DIE FOR MEN, has not a uniform sense, but a different meaning in different passages. This we can by no means concede; for Christ is never said to die for men in any other sense than in the sense of substitution or exchange of places. He really entered into our place, and by so doing incurred our doom and responsibility; and we as truly enter into His place, and partake of His merits and reward. And a different mode of viewing the transaction is not to be found in Scripture.

That many who are not believers derive great advantages from Christ’s atonement, is not denied. They enjoy an economy of forbearance, are freed from the pernicious errors and defilements of idolatry, and live among the people of God. But these blessings, manifold and various, do not warrant us to say that the Lord died for men in a double–way, or with a double reference; that is, for some vicariously, and for others to give them only a temporary advantage. He died as a representative and surety; and whatever their representative Head did, they are regarded as having done, as this text proves. He not only died for them all, but THEY ALL DIED IN HIM.

II. Another important passage, defining the nature of the atonement, occurs a few verses afterwards in the same chapter: And 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 to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18, 19). The apostle had mentioned that the new creature emanates from God, and then assigned as its ground the atoning work of Christ. We have first to notice the principal cause of the reconciliation: “all is of God, who hath reconciled us.” The allusion is to the Father, to whom the Savior was wont to refer all that He did. We have to consider God as offended and provoked by sin, and yet providing the reconciliation by which they who had incurred His displeasure are restored to His favor. The term RECONCILIATION, as we have elsewhere shown, implies that in ourselves we were exposed to divine wrath, and that a divine provision brought it to an end.

There is no force in the current objection, that God could not entertain anger or hostility, when He so loved us, that He sent His only–begotten Son to usher in the reconciliation. Scripture affirms both; and, as we have already proved, they can well consist together. That sins provoke the holy God, in the exercise of His moral government, to righteous anger, is an axiom or first principle with everyone who has acquired a rudimentary knowledge of God; for all men know that He is no indifferent spectator of the moral actions of His creatures (Rom. 1:32). He claims the exercise of vengeance as His peculiar attribute, which He will have left in His own hand; and He declares that He will repay (Rom. 12:19). But He ceases not to love His creatures as His workmanship; and He loves them with a superadded love, when, viewing the elect in His Son, He loves them with the same love with which He loves His Son. In Christ the wrath of God is appeased, but not by a relaxation of justice or a reduction of His claims. He cannot but bear just anger against sin, and against the sinner on account of sin, as is sufficiently proved by actual punishments inflicted.

The apostle intends to bring out the proper nature of reconciliation, as is plain from the fact that he expressly
mentions that God hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ. This shows, as an analysis of the language suffices to prove, that in effecting the reconciliation, God exercised His mercy not absolutely, and irrespective of a mediator; for participation in divine favor depends on the work of a Surety, whom God appointed as the way of access or channel by which His favor could be obtained. This is evident by a comparison of passages in the New Testament, where allusion is made to reconciliation as a transition from wrath to favor, from hostility to friendship, from alienation to restored fellowship. That is the uniform import of the term; and however much mutual reconciliation is involved in the nature of the case, the term principally means reconciliation on the part of Him whose anger was incurred, and who could renew a friendly intercourse only on the ground of a satisfaction.

But it is argued by those who allow anger in God, only in the case of those who remain at last impenitent till the day of grace is past, that reconciliation means our favorable disposition toward God. They put this view on several grounds, all which are equally baseless. Thus, they assert

(1) that God is never called man’s enemy; an argument as absurd as it would be to argue against punishment, on the ground that a human state or judicial tribunal is never called the enemy of the citizens, when the question is whether the authority of the law is to be executed against transgressors: for a human tribunal is but a reflection of the divine, and based on the same eternal principles of justice. They assert

(2) that, in biblical language, reconciliation never indicates that anything is necessary on God’s side before our reception into favor. 62 That, too, is contrary to the words before us: “who hath reconciled us to Himself BY JESUS Christ.” And the same thing appears in the Epistle to the Romans, where, as we already
pointed out, it is affirmed that we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son (Rom. 5:10). But

(3) another, assertion, as baseless as the two former, is, that we cannot suppose such a thing as the appeasing or pacifying of God’s anger, because we nowhere read in the New Testament of God’s reconciliation to man. But we have already proved that the term, as used in Scripture, is not equivalent to our being well affected toward God, and imbued with a friendly disposition toward God, but means that we are secured from His wrath (Rom. 5:9), and can count on His favor and benefits (Rom. 5:1). In a word, it is God’s favor toward us, not our favorable disposition toward God.

This leads me to the use of the term, and to the definition of it. The party whose affection has been won cannot be determined from the nominative to the verb, nor from the accusative case which follows the verb, but is ascertained from the connection and the known position of the parties. The restored favor of the offended party has an influence on the other: they each come into a new position. Warrantably we may either say that a person is reconciled to us, or that we are reconciled to him. When the verb is found in the passive, it either means to give up a quarrel on our side (1 Cor. 7:11), or to induce another to abate his anger and terminate his just resentment against us (Matt. 5:24). In the latter passage, the words, “Be reconciled to thy brother,” do not, mean, Be well disposed to thy brother—for that, in the case adduced by the Lord, could have been done in the temple—but, Leave thy gift; go and induce thy brother, who has Just cause of resentment against thee, to return to a friendly disposition toward you. And this required a visit to the offended party.

In this sense the word occurs wherever allusion is made to man’s reconciliation to God. It does not mean our subjective reconciliation to God, but God’s objective reconciliation to us; and one of the most conclusive proofs of this occurs in a passage already noticed: “We joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by
whom we have now received the atonement,” or reconciliation (Rom. 5:11). There it is said to have been received.
An inward act of man is done, or performed; it cannot be received: but there it is affirmed that we received it. That the allusion is to the appeasing of God’s anger, clearly appears from the words which refer to Christ’s death as the meritorious cause of effecting peace (Rom. 5:10).

In the great transaction of reconciling sinners, God is an active party: He reconciles us to Himself by Jesus Christ. And what comes in between the love of God and His holy anger? Only one thing—the atonement—which harmonizes both in our reconciliation to God. God Himself provided the atonement as the means of reconciliation, and on this sole ground of intercourse He receives us to favor. Not that men laid down their opposition and sued for peace. The principal cause is God, who provided reconciliation. Then, as to the procuring cause, Christ by His atonement meritoriously won the favor of God for those who, but for this, would for ever have been given up to divine wrath and condemnation. Reconciliation, then, is simply the removal of the separation and enmity between God and the world. But we must notice the language more minutely.

As to the method of construing the second of the two verses (ver. 19), three modes are proposed, for reasons which demand attention.

**a.** Some take the expression, “God was in Christ reconciling the world,” as an allusion to Christ’s divine nature. Paul is thus regarded as teaching that the Redeemer was not merely the instrument which God made use of in the work of redemption, but that He was also God Himself. Certainly reasons may be urged in behalf of this view from the structure of the language. Thus, it may be said, two representations are given in succession, which we may warrantably suppose are somewhat varied, and not a mere tautology. In the first, God is described as the author of the reconciliation, and Christ as the instrument by whom it was accomplished: “All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus
Christ.” And in the second it is said: “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.”. Now, it is argued that, to avoid the flat repetition of one and the same thing, it is better to view the clause as referring to the higher nature of Christ. This interpretation considered the Redeemer not as a mere instrument, but as a divine person, capable of so great a work, and giving it a boundless value.

b. Another mode of construing is as follows: “God in Christ was reconciling the world.” This is the mode of resolving the words generally received at present by the most eminent philological expounders. This view is maintained chiefly because the following clause more precisely defines in what way the atonement was effected. The two points, then, are as follows: 1. A non–imputation of sin to us so far as the matter bears upon our relation toward God; 2. The atoning act considered as emanating not from man, but from God, or as God’s own act in inward unity and fellowship with Christ. Undoubtedly this interpretation can be rendered highly probable, and gives a satisfactory sense.

c. Another mode seems to me even preferable according to the translation above given: God was reconciling the world unto Himself in Christ. This does not construe the words IN CHRIST with the activity of the divine nature in the Lord Himself, nor with the Father’s activity in providing the atonement, but in connection with the new relation into which mankind were brought, as they stood in Christ. The meaning will then be: God reconciled them in Christ, as He regarded them in Him, and comprehended them in union with His Son, according to His covenant and purpose. This seems to me the shade of meaning that properly belongs to the passage.

With regard to the other terms, are we to understand the word WORLD as descriptive of the human family?
In this general sense the word frequently occurs in the style of Paul and the other apostles (Rom. 3:19; 1 Cor. 1:21). It is often used to indicate the unbelieving world, as contrasted from the church of God, because the great majority still continues alienated from the life of God. Here it does not mean the world of believers—a sense in which, so far as I know, it does not occur—but the world of mankind as one day standing out to view, including Jews and Gentiles alike. From this, however, it by no means follows that all were actually reconciled. Our mode of construing IN CHRIST proves the opposite. And this is further confirmed by the clause which runs parallel with it: “not imputing their trespasses unto them.” Thus the apostle speaks of an accomplished fact, finished once for all. But one or two points may still be separately noticed.

1. We are said to be reconciled IN CHRIST; an expression which at first sight seems to be equivalent to the phrase BY CHRIST, which occurs in the previous verse. But they do not coincide. The present phrase denotes something more: for the apostle’s language is precise, representing Christ not only as the meritorious cause of reconciliation, which the phrase of the previous verse in such a connection usually means, but as the objective reconciliation. As in Him we have the objective redemption (Eph. 1:7), so in Him we have the objective reconciliation; much in the same way as He is said to be made of God unto us righteousness and sanctification (1 Cor. 1:30), or as He is called our peace (Eph. 2:14). The apostle changes the preposition on purpose.

2. The reconciliation was effected by not imputing to us our trespasses (ver. 19). Opinion varies, indeed, as to the way in which the participial clause is to be resolved: some regarding the non-imputation of sin as the cause of reconciliation; others, less correctly, considering it as the effect. The latter is a mistaken view, and is opposed to the usage of a participial clause. Paul affirms that God reconciles the world by not imputing to men their trespasses. And the
reconciliation, as to its mode, is effected in this twofold way:

(1) by not imputing sin to us, and

(2) by Christ becoming the sin–bearer (ver. 21); that is, the world is reconciled because sin was laid on Christ, and not imputed to us.

3. God is said to place those to whom sin is not imputed in a state of reconciliation TO HIMSELF. That means, that the atonement restores men to their right relation to law and order; or, more definitely, to a friendly fellowship with a personal God. It is the removal of hostility. As redemption is a redemption to God in the sense that we are liberated from captivity to belong to God (Rev. 5:9; 1 Cor. 6:19), so reconciliation is a reconciliation to God in the sense that we are restored to God so as to be His friends; and the reconciliation supposes something mutual: for a mutual relation of this nature is essential to the thing, though not properly in the word.

Only one thing remains to be noticed. The words, “Be reconciled to God,” which Paul adds as the burden of all preaching (5:20), are equivalent to “Receive the atonement.”

III. Another passage, subjoined to the former, and closely connected with it, points out most emphatically the mode of the atonement: 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 (2 Cor. 5:21). The verse, connected by the grounding particle FOR with the previous passage descriptive of the message of reconciliation, assigns the ground on which that message rests. That is the force of the particle for; and the import is, that God made an exchange between us and Christ, of such a nature that He, the sinless, was treated as if He were the sinner—nay, as sin itself—that
we might be made the righteousness of God.

Two statements are thus brought together, and lie near each other: the non-imputation of sin to those who are reconciled (ver. 19), and the fact that Christ was made sin. And these two statements involve each other. The reason or ground on which the non-imputation of sin proceeds, is the fact that Christ was made sin

That is involved in the message of reconciliation. But these two points just mentioned, and lying at the foundation of preaching, incontrovertibly show that the end of Christ’s coming was not to proclaim absolute forgiveness, but to usher in an expiation, or a work of atonement, on the ground of which that proclamation of forgiveness might be made. The connection between the atonement and the message, “Be reconciled to God,” is thus clearly brought out. Apart from the atonement, preaching would have no foundation, would have no message to proclaim, and would be denuded of all the force accompanying it.

In exhibiting the contents of this pregnant text, I shall endeavor, with all brevity, to bring out its import under a few heads.

1. The source of the whole atonement is traced to GOD, who is said to HAVE MADE CHRIST what the text describes. And the expression raises our thoughts to that agreement, or covenant, according to which the Father appointed His own Son to assume our human nature and bear our guilt.

2. But a further idea, that of sinlessness, is brought out in the words, WHO KNEW NO SIN. The expression is intended to show that the sinless perfection of Jesus—that is, His innocence and perfect obedience to the divine law—was the foundation or presupposition of the entire work of expiation. But in whose account was He judged sinless? The Greek phrase, which has a peculiar force
attaching to it, which must accurately be ascertained, contains an answer to that question. The peculiar phrase, WHO KNEW NO SIN, is called by philologists the subjective negation, because wherever it is used it denotes a negative estimate or judgment formed in the mind of some party. And when we ask, By whom was the judgment formed in this case? the conclusion to which we must come is, that it either expresses Christ’s own conscious estimate—and the subjective negation will, on this supposition, set forth His own consciousness of perfect sinlessness—or else that it expresses the Father’s judgment formed of Him at the divine tribunal. One thing is very evident: the terms and context do not allow us to refer the phraseology to a mere ordinary human estimate of Jesus. Most naturally, the party whose judgment is introduced, and who regarded Him as sinless, is the same that was represented as making Him to be sin for us—viz. God.  

If we take this acceptation, as the strict import of the Greek phrase leads us most naturally to do, then Jesus was esteemed or judged by God as completely faultless, and as never having had one feeling at variance with the divine will and law. He did no sin. But the relation of the two connected clauses is of such a kind as makes it clear that sinlessness is equivalent to perfect obedience, for the negative side implies the POSITIVE MODE OF PUTTING IT. He was thus exempt from every fault, whether of omission or of commission. And the ultimate aim of God in all this, was not only to qualify Him for undertaking the task of sinbearing, but also to pave the way for bringing in a vicarious righteousness. The statement therefore is, that He who was sinless in God’s account—and only one immaculately perfect in every part of positive obedience could be so—was made sin.

3. This sinless one, judged in God’s account as one who knew no sin, is next described as having been MADE SIN. The first inquiry is, What does this properly mean?

a. Many deem it best to take it as simply equivalent to a sin–offering; and, indeed, the Septuagint several times uses the original word to denote this sacrifice: for the sin–offering was regarded as incorporated sin or
embodied guilt, viewed objectively and apart. Such an exposition affords a competent enough sense, and does not in fact alter the meaning. But it deserves notice, in the first place, that throughout this entire passage the apostle makes no use of sacrificial language; and the term reconciliation is allowed on all hands to be taken from ordinary life, and not from the sacrificial ritual. Then it is evident that the apostle draws a contrast between two things,—between the personal sinlessness of Jesus, and His official position as made sin for us,—and that this contrast is lost by the sacrificial reference. But there is a further antithesis not less strong. Christ is represented as made sin for us, in the same way in which we are made the righteousness of God; that is, by a judicial act on the part of God, the moral Governor and Judge. This is unfavorable to our accepting the idea of a sin–offering. It would be quite unsuitable in the second clause, which affirms that we are made the righteousness of God, and therefore it cannot be admitted in the first. But for the connection, and the twofold antithesis now mentioned, the rendering “sin–offering” would be unobjectionable. The double antithesis seems to demand the abstract term SIN, as correctly rendered in the English authorized version.

b. Much less appropriate is another interpretation, MADE HIM A SINNER. Many excellent writers have explained the phrase in this way, but it is plainly inappropriate. In the first place, no instance of that usage occurs in Scripture. Then there is a want of due precision evinced in the way of distinguishing things that differ by the propounders of this interpretation. If, indeed, care was taken to distinguish between the personal and the official, there would not be the same objection to the word. But the term SOONER is in all languages too much associated with the idea of personal demerit to be applied to Christ, and is out of keeping with the constant reference to His perfect innocence, and to His suffering as the just for the unjust, the holy for the unholy. The two ideas, always put together throughout the entire Scriptures in the delineation of the atonement—viz. SINLESSNESS and SIN—BEARING. or personal perfection and official liability to divine wrath —and which are repeated here, must ever be kept apart both in
form and substance. It is therefore a mistake to make the term SIN equivalent to SINNER in the passage before us.

c. We abide by the abstract term SIN, which, we may notice, is here used by the apostle with a peculiar force. What does it convey to Christian minds? It affords this sense—that Christ was made the sin of His people by the imputation of their guilt to Him; for the sin not imputed to those who are reconciled (ver. 19) is, as we had occasion to notice already, here said to be imputed to Christ, and in such a sense that He could be described as made sin. The words, strictly considered, therefore mean, that by God’s appointment He was made sin, not in mere semblance, but in reality, not before men, but before God, on the great foundation of a federal unity between Him and His people. He was, as it were, the embodiment of sin or incorporated guilt; and we may well affirm that never was so much sin accumulated upon a single head. He was not made sin in a vague, indefinite, abstract way; but the very sins of which we are painfully conscious in the moment of conviction—that is, our own sins of nature and life—were laid on Him, or transferred from our head to His. He bore their burden; and this rendered it possible to visit Him with the recompense due to sin, and with its necessary punishment, which would otherwise have been impossible.

The true import of this memorable clause, then—which, along with some other texts, has always been considered as of paramount moment for determining the true nature of the atonement—is thus rendered apparent. It means that, by God’s appointment, Christ was made the sins of all His people, and that He made them His as much as if He had been divinely constituted sin in the abstract, or as sin embodied; that they were transferred to His person by what is usually designated imputation, and charged to His account. That was effected in such a way as clearly displayed the distinction between His personal and representative standing before God. While He was personally the object of the Father’s everlasting love and complacency, He was officially guilty in our guilt. The paternal and the governmental on the part of God may easily be distinguished
and viewed apart. He never was the object of the Father’s loathing or aversion, even when forsaken. He never was, what the sinner inevitably is, abhorred, or abominable; because a distinction could always be made between the only begotten Son, the righteous Servant, and the sin–bearing Substitute.

How He was made sin, will appear from the following description. While here among men—that is, from the incarnation to the cross—He was, by a divine act, made the sin–bearer in room of His people; and there never was a moment, from the assumption of our nature to the death on the tree, when He did not bear our Sins and appear guilty as the surety of His church. Nor was He guilty before men, but before God. And furthermore, it must specially be noticed that this was not legal fiction, but divine fact. A second consideration, necessary to the full comprehension of this great transaction, is, that it was not by any infusion within, but by objective imputation. And it carried with it consequences of a punitive character not less real and heavy than if the sin had been His own. He made it His own by His voluntary act.

Here it seems necessary to take notice of the evasion to which the opponents of the vicarious satisfaction usually have recourse. The objections are singularly similar, if not the same in words, whether we have regard to former or recent times. These passages are all explained away by the writers to whom we allude, as if they referred only to indignities endured at the hands of men. They reduce the statement made by the apostle in this verse to this, that the Lord received from the hands of men a treatment which wore the appearance of, and might have been construed as if it were, the treatment given to a sinner. But is there any indication that the words express mere semblance or appearance? The text does not affirm that He was reputed among men to be a sinner. It affirms that He was made sin; that God made Him so: and that plainly goes much further than to imply that He wore in man’s esteem the appearance of being a criminal or a sinner. Plainly the allusion is not to what He received at the hands of man, or was reputed in man’s
The import of the passage, then, amounts to this: Christ, the sinless One, the realized ideal of humanity, the embodiment of the divine law, wrapped Himself in His people’s sin, and was constituted sin, by His Father’s act and by His own, in such a manner that at the bar of God He was no longer innocent. Rather He was made the concentrated sin of the redeemed church, because found among sinners, federally united to them, and charged at the bar of God with all their sins.

This sin–bearing capacity of Jesus proceeds on several presuppositions,—a community of nature, and a federal relation between the Surety and those in whose behalf His work was undertaken. Without these no basis could have existed either for imputation or punishment; for penal suffering has its formal ground in guilt. So true is this, that it would be an anomaly, an incongruity, a moral impossibility, in the divine government to punish without guilt. Nay, it would be a subversion of justice. The scope of this entire statement, therefore, is, that the Lord Jesus was in the divine judgment regarded in no other light than as a surety; and that, being, made sin according to the divine constitution, He was charged with guilt not less really than if it had been all His own. The entire life of Christ on earth, as delineated by the evangelists and described by the apostles, is indeed set forth as the brightest exhibition of sinless perfection. But they add another feature—that of sin–bearing. The expression, THE SINLESS SIN–BEARER, may be said aptly to describe His earthly
career. Certainly they who look merely at His innocence mistake the gospel, if they do not overthrow it. He was not a sinless individual, as one of many, but A SINLESS SURETY OR MEDIATOR IN OUR STEAD. And the text further states, that to exempt us from the guilt of sin—or, in other words, that sin might no more be imputed to us—the sinless One was “made sin for us.” This is, in theological nomenclature, correctly enough termed the imputation of sin to Christ.

4. The end for which Christ was made sin was, THAT WE MIGHT BE MADE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM. The apostle again uses the abstract term, as in the previous clause. We need not dwell on the phrase “the righteousness of God,” which we already expounded at large. Let it suffice to say that here the one clause of this verse explains the other. We are made the righteousness of God in the same way in which Christ was made sin. The antithesis of the two clauses is in the highest degree important. They are both objective; they are both by imputation, not by infusion. We are, through Christ’s vicarious obedience, made the righteousness of God. And this is found only in Him objectively, and as we are united to Him by a living faith.

IV. Another passage in the same epistle, containing the same allusion to the exchange of places, is as follows: For ye know the grace of our lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich (2Cor. 8:9). The apostle’s design was to enforce liberality toward the poor saints for whom he was making a contribution among the Gentile churches; and he presents to the mind of the Corinthians the most constraining motive—the Lord’s abasement to poverty for our sakes. There are three points to which the passage refers, and to which we shall make a brief allusion:

1. The clause “though He was rich,” refers to His divine pre-existence, or to that
which He possessed as the Creator and owner of all. In the form of God eternally rich, exempt from any want, and not needing even the external universe to fill up a blank or to complete His personal happiness, He lived in the eternal fellowship of His Father before the world was. We may say, that before the outward universe was called into being by His fiat, and when it existed only by possibility in Him, He was infinitely blessed in Himself; and the world was made to be an object on which His boundless fullness was to be lavished, but not to fill up an unsatisfied want in Him, personally considered.

2. He became POOR in the exercise of GRACE TO US. This refers to earthly abasement, to which He spontaneously came down for man’s sake; and it is affirmed of the whole person of the God–man, on the principle that we speak of Him in the concrete by either of His natures. The allusion is to the incarnate state of the Lord, when He became what He was not; for there was no change, and there could be none, upon His deity. But as He entered into a new sphere, and a new form of activity, Paul has in his eye the whole abased poor life of Christ; and the statement is, that as He lived on earth without property, goods, or comforts, such as other men enjoy, and had not where to lay His head, it was all for our sakes.

This was done not simply as a preliminary to His arrest and crucifixion—though the apostle says that, had they known Him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (1 Cor. 2:8)—but as the penal consequence of sin all through life; for He was AT ONCE THE SIN–BEARER AND THE CURSE–BEARER AT EVERY STAGE OF His CAREER. Hence it was that He took poverty as He took other parts of our curse; and the design was to free us from the penal consequences of sin.

3. It was FOR OUR SAKES; that is, for the good of the Corinthians, and all Christians generally. The meaning appears from the last passage expounded by us. The Lord made an exchange of places with us. The
atoning element, though commonly ascribed to the death of Christ, or to His
blood sacrificially viewed, takes in His entire sin–bearing life, and His continuous
abasement as the substitute of His people. But it may be asked, Why is such
emphasis here laid upon His poverty? The subject suggested it to the apostle’s
mind, and the whole is placed in a strong antithesis. We do not need to view the
separate parts of His suffering obedience as separately meritorious, as if it served
a good purpose to ascribe, as some have done, pardon to His death, and
acceptance to His active obedience. That serves no purpose but to complicate the
matter, and divide into fragments the one work of the Lord. The whole obedience
together is meritorious; but it may be seen in many lights, as a compensation or
exchange. It is competent, doubtless, on the warrant of such a passage, to hold
that the whole atoning obedience is applied in its unity at every point, and with a
phase adapted to even actual want of the human heart. But that is rather the
application of the vicarious work to the details of human necessity; and in this
way we may fitly affirm that He was abased to atone for pride, poor to expiate the
guilt of covetousness, hungry and thirsty on account of that intemperate
indulgence which has in all ages conquered men from the eating of the forbidden
fruit to this hour. 76 In the same manner, we may affirm that He was abased that
we might be exalted, a servant to set us free, troubled that we might be comforted,
tempted that we might conquer, dishonored that we may be glorified, and
scourgèd that by His stripes we might be healed. The entire abasement of Christ,
in the unity of His obedience, was for us; and we do not need to seek a separate
atoning element in every little detail.

As to our becoming RICH in consequence of Christ’s work, that is His reward as
purchased for us. It is not earthly riches, indeed; for this was neither the design of
His atonement, nor the actual result, but the whole riches of His inheritance and
kingdom.

Section 6.—The Epistle to the
Galatians.

This epistle furnishes a testimony to the ATONEMENT the more striking, because, contrasted with a legal tendency, setting it off like a foil. The apostle had twice visited Galatia (Gal. 4:13; Acts 16:6, 18:23), and refers to his preaching of the atonement there when he says that Christ Jesus had been evidently set forth before their eyes as crucified (Gal. 3:1). But within a short time after his last visit, a perilous corruption of doctrine had been introduced, through the artful representation of zealots for the law, who had succeeded in bringing over the Galatians to the opinion that the observance of Jewish rites was necessary to their acceptance with God.

The apostle’s aim in the epistle was to counteract this legal spirit. It was not a question as to a few indifferent rites with which the Jews were familiar, and which they were not prepared as yet to abandon, but a question as to acceptance with God; for these ceremonies were considered as necessary for acquiring righteousness. In exposing this error, the apostle brought the Galatians to the atonement as the sole ground of man’s acceptance, and one to which no addition could be made; and the whole argument went to prove, that they who substituted another ground of acceptance overthrew the foundation of Christianity. Hence his repeated appeals to the atonement at all the turns of his argument. In the very salutation with which the epistle opens, he interweaves an allusion to the death of Christ as the one foundation of acceptance and redemption.
I. The first passage on the atonement is as follows: *Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world* (Gal. 1:4). How much the apostle’s mind was possessed with this great truth, appears from the fact that he starts with it, and intimates through the entire epistle that nothing besides Christ crucified can stand as the foundation of a sinner’s acceptance. Three points may be noticed on this verse.

1. The self–oblation of the Lord Jesus: WHO GAVE Himself. The expression occurs elsewhere, to intimate that He willingly offered Himself (1 Tim. 2:6; Tit. 1:14; Matt. 20:28). The phrase which our Lord employs is of the same import: “I lay down my life” (John 10:17). Christ was not seized by the hand of violence, but spontaneously offered Himself; a line of thought followed out in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Not only did the Father provide the sacrifice, and deliver Him up to death for us all (Rom. 8:32): the Lord Jesus gave Himself by a priestly act. The phrase indicates Christ’s spontaneous priestly action in His death. This peculiar mode of describing the atonement indicates that He was the priest of His own sacrifice—the sacrificer and the victim in one.

2. The apostle’s language affirms still more definitely, that He gave Himself FOR OUR SINS. The object was to lead the Galatians into deeper views of the scope of Christ’s atoning death, and to rescue them from any hankering after legal ceremonies that made the death of Christ superfluous. The expression indicates that there was a relation between Christ’s death and the sins of men; that our sins made it necessary as the procuring and meritorious cause of His death. The reason why He gave Himself is here assigned. The same representation is given in many passages, whether we turn to the ancient prophecies (Isa. 53:5), or to the statements explanatory of Christ’s death in the epistles (Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:3; 1 Pet. 3:18). Between the Lord’s priestly oblation and our sins there was a relation so peculiar, that our sins and His death stood connected as cause and consequence. These sins were the cause of His death.
It is necessary to bring out the import of this phraseology, because many explain it away. The expression cannot mean that He was cut off by human violence sinfully exercised. Such a comment cannot be engrafted on the clause: it is descriptive of the Lord’s giving Himself by a spontaneous sacrifice. They were actual sins, which did not first exist or come to light when Christ was violently put to death. Nor were the sins limited to that age, or to violent men in Jerusalem; for the apostle, comprehending himself and the Galatians, who had nothing to do with these acts of violence, says, “who gave Himself FOR OUR SINS.” Nor do such phrases allude to the putting away of sin by future amendment; for this very thing, as we shall see, is subjoined as the scope contemplated by the sacrifice. To make the clause under our consideration of the same import with the final clause, afterwards to be noticed, would be a flat tautology. Not only so: it would fasten on Paul’s reasoning the absurdity of making the means and the end, the cause and effect, identical.

The expression means that He gave Himself on account of sin; that His death stood in the same relation to sin as death uniformly does,—that is, that death was in His case, too, the wages of sin. And the consequence is as follows: If the Lord died for our sins, they whom He represented do not require to die for their own sins. If, in the moral government of God, our sins were the cause of Christ’s death, there can be no second exaction of the penal consequences from us personally. The result of a comparison of these phrases is, that Christ occupied a vicarious position; that He died on our account and for our benefit, but so because He was our substitute at the tribunal of God.

3. All this was done, THAT HE MIGHT DELIVER US FROM THIS PRESENT EVIL WORLD. The final
particle (οthren) brings before us the divine purpose, or Christ’s own aim in dying for our sins—that ethical and sanctifying result to which we already alluded. The fruits intended by the death of Christ are very various—as numerous, indeed, as the effects of sin; some bearing on the acceptance of our persons, others on the renovation of our natures: and the death of Christ stands in causal connection with both. But it deserves notice, that when life and renewing are referred to as the results of His atonement, the acceptance of the person is always presupposed; that is, the person is accepted, and then the nature is sanctified. Though the atonement stands in causal connection with both, the personal standing is first rectified, as the immediate result of the Lord’s death. 80

This passage shows that, besides the acceptance of the man, as the immediate effect of the Lord’s death, a second effect is by no means to be overlooked. Most expositors view the clause as referring to the ethical design of the death of Christ; but it is not the ethical effect in the form of motive, but new spiritual life, or renewing in the spirit of our mind. This is procured by the death of Christ, as well as the pardon of guilt; and that, too, not on the mere ground of moral influence, but on a ground immeasurably deeper—on that of the divine rectitude and according to the deepest principles of the moral government of God. It is the more necessary to lay emphasis on this, that we may meet the cavil, all too current, that the doctrine of substitution is cold, external, and disconnected from spiritual life and ethical results.

II. Another passage, descriptive of the relation between Christ and His people in His atoning work, is as follows: I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain (Gal. 2:20, 21). The context forms part of that reproof addressed to Peter for his vacillation and timidity. Peter did not as an apostle teach amiss; but
his concessions to the zealots, in ceasing to eat with the Gentiles, encouraged them. Paul accordingly exposed the dangerous principle. He shows that its real meaning implied that a Christian was not complete in the atoning death of Christ, but needed something more; that, according to the Judaizing party, men in Christ, and depending on nothing beyond His finished work, had so imperfect a ground of acceptance, that they could be viewed only as sinners, or such as were without a full title (ver. 17); that they made Christ only what Moses had been—a minister of sin and condemnation (ver. 17); in a word, that all who sought righteousness by something supplementary to Christ, avowed that He was not a perfect Savior. He adds that, in the first instance, they had sought to be accepted in Christ without the works of the law, believing on Christ as all their title; but that now they built again what they had destroyed. By seeking a title through works, they did not stand on the atonement as the sole ground of acceptance, but viewed themselves as imperfect and guilty if they had not something in addition to the work of Christ. The apostle adds, that by the law he died to the law (ver. 19); and the statement can only mean, that the death to the law was grounded on his being crucified with Christ. The following points here demand notice:—

1. We are said to be CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST, because, when one died for all, it was the same as if all died. This expression belongs to justification from sin, or to our partaking of the merit of Christ’s death, and does not mean the putting away of sin by inward renovation; for if that were indicated by our being crucified with Christ, what would then be meant by our resurrection with Him? When the apostle speaks of dying with Christ, or of being crucified with Him, he does not first use it literally, and then metaphorically; nor describe two different acts, resembling each other—one in Christ’s personal experience, and one in ours, some way similar. What is there in us that can bear a comparison with the bitter death of the cross, or be designated by the name? But it consists with reason and the nature of the thing to designate our partnership with Christ, or participation in His sufferings, by this phrase; because, when Christ was crucified in our room and stead, it was
in the divine account the same as if we ourselves had been crucified for sin. The compound verb CO–CRUCIFIED intimates the partnership of many in the Lord’s action; and the additional words, WITH Christ, imply that it was accomplished in Him, or along with Him.

A unique relationship subsisted between God and His people with Christ as the federal head; Christ’s action of surety is regarded by God as the act of the elect as well.

The apostle presupposes, too, what he afterwards brings out, that the curse of the law was executed on Christ crucified; that His crucifixion comprehended His sufferings, as well as all that positive fulfillment of the law by which He became obedient unto death. And when Paul here says that we are crucified with Christ, the sense is: We are viewed as suffering what He suffered, and as doing what He did. And thus, in virtue of His finished work, we enter into His federal reward.

2. The apostle no sooner mentions his co–crucifixion with Christ, than he subjoins, according to his wont, an allusion to the risen life, or premial life. The two are commonly put together, because it is life considered as the reward of fulfilling the law (Gal. 3:12); and the meritorious cause of this life is Christ crucified for all whom He represented—the cause of life by His atonement. Had the Son of God not interposed, in the capacity of surety, offering Himself to fulfill the precepts and satisfy the penalty of the divine law in our room, this premial life could never have been bestowed on fallen men. But the death and life are put together, on the principle that they must be conjoined in our case not less than in the experience of the Lord Himself; because we were one with Him in both conditions—in Him when suffering, and then as sharing in His reward.

The apostle in this passage connects the resurrection life so closely with Christ’s
own life, that he puts it as if it were a reproduction, or continued manifestation, of the life of Christ. It differs from the creation–life, or what may be called the primeval Adamic life, in this respect, that it is secured for ever on the ground of justice; a premial life—a life of confirmation after a period of probation has been successfully fulfilled—a life immutable, to be forfeited no more. This eternal life evinces its presence in the same way as natural life, by the operations, exercises, or activity of its spiritual faculties; and they who possess it hear the voice of the Son of God (John 5:25), understand the word (1 Cor. 2:10–14), taste that the Lord is gracious (1 Pet. 2:3), see with enlightened eyes (Eph. 1:18), and will to do good, though not always effecting what they would (Rom. 7:19). In a word, they live as members of Christ, the everliving Head, to such a degree, that they say, “Not I, but Christ liveth in me,” that is, with a federal unity, but a distinct personality.

3. Next follows a delineation of the life of faith, that is, of life as exercised in faith upon its proper object. Speaking of life in its activity here below, the apostle says that it preeminently displays itself in faith on the Redeemer, as loving His people with a special love, and giving Himself for them by a special atonement. Obviously, that is not the language of faith for attaining justification, but the language of a man already justified, and glorying in a sense of acceptance and the experience of grace. The spiritual life of a Christian finds its activity on the same object to which the anxious inquirer first came for pardon, with this difference that it is now accepted in its special destination: “who loved ME, and gave Himself for ME.” This exhaustless theme has been summed up in three pregnant terms—talis tanta, tantillis. 82

a. The Redeemer is described as the Son of God; and we see from this, that the expiation of sin is not the work of a mere man, but the work of the God–man, as He is designated in connection with His atonement, by a relation peculiar to His divine nature. The error of the Church of Rome consisted in ascribing the atonement too exclusively to the action of the human nature, and in limiting the mediatorial activity to this side of His
person. But the sacerdotal sacrifice was the action of the person, and hence we read that they crucified the Lord of glory (1 Cor. 2:8). The terrible suffering was not experienced by the divine nature, and took effect on the humanity. But it was the Son of God who atoned. The God–man suffered; and the sacrifice consisted in this, that it was the spontaneous act of one more worthy than any creature, and offering what was His own,—an oblation of more value than a whole world of sinners.

b. As to the love of the Son of God, to which reference is also made, it is described in the past tense, because it culminated upon the cross. That was displayed by the greatness of His person, the meanness and unworthiness of the objects toward whom it was exercised, and the inconceivable abasement and suffering to which He descended. It was self–moving, and uncaused by ought without Himself. It was love self–originated: He loved us, because He would love us; and whether we look at His person and offices, or at the fact that it was exercised to a people given Him by the Father, we find much to excite reflection. It was the love of a God–man, at once divine and human,—the love of one who interposed between two disunited parties to reconcile them, who had compassion on the ignorant as a priest, and discharged their obligations as a surety.

c. The apostle adds, HE GAVE HIMSELF FOR ME. This conveys a sacrificial idea, whether God is described as giving His Son, or the Son is described as giving Himself. When we inquire what He gave, the answer contained in the apostle’s statement is: He gave not some, nor all, the riches of creation, but Himself,—an oblation beyond comparison greater than all the works of His hands.

d. The love and sacrifice are equally described in their special destination; and the conclusion to be drawn is, that the atonement was provided for a definite class given in the Father’s gift, and specially represented by the Son in the mediatorial
capacity in which He condescended to act the part of a substitute and surety. The language be absolutely unmeaning if this were not intended. A special love and definite atonement cannot be explained away, if words are to be interpreted in their natural sense.

The apostle does not speak of the first exercise of faith, or the faith of adherence cleaving to the general declarations of divine love; that is, the faith by which we are accepted. The apostle’s words refer to what is special, and presuppose assurance. They describe faith on Christ as exercising a special love to us, and offering a special atonement for us, taken from the general mass of men. This appropriation of faith animated Paul through life, and is imbibed by all true Christians subsequently to the acceptance of their person; though faith first clings to the general invitations indiscriminately addressed to the hearers of the gospel.

4. Paul now uses a syllogism to negate the idea that the law can add anything to the righteousness of Christ, or to His redemptive act:

If righteousness comes through the law, Christ died without cause.

Christ did not die without cause.

Therefore: Righteousness is not achieved through the law.

Such is the syllogism; and if the argument has any cogency, or language any significance, OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, or TITLE to eternal life, is found exclusively in THE ATONING DEATH of Christ. Attention is principally to be fixed on the minor proposition; and in expounding it, it must be noticed that the word rendered IN VAIN, may be taken either as defining the cause or the effect but in the present case as defining the cause thus: He died without occasion, or
gratuitously, and without necessity, as the word is
elsewhere used (John 15:25). But no one with adequate views of divine wisdom, or knowledge of the prophecies respecting the Messiah, will affirm that His mission, at so great a cost, was without a cause, or superfluous; for God would not allow His only Son to be abased and suffer a malefactor’s death without a cause. But there was no fit or adequate cause for His atoning work, UNLESS RIGHTEOUSNESS COME BY His DEATH, and by no other channel. If the law could have accomplished ought, the apostle says that righteousness and life would both have been by the law (Gal. 3:21; Rom. 8:3).

The apostle’s argument, if we would correctly apprehend it, is as follows: Either Christ died without an adequate occasion, or the fruit as well as the definite design of His death was to usher in an ever–valid title, or righteousness. This is the positive side of the atonement, considered as a deed. It presupposes the negative side, or the atonement as the carrying out of the penalty of death originally pronounced against sin. All must die, and God can have no intercourse with sinners till the cause of separation is taken out of the way, and death endured as the wages of sin. No other cause can be assigned for the Lord’s death and the sufferings through which He passed. His death was indispensably necessary, and inflexibly demanded, if a righteousness was to be brought in.

Christ’s death was necessary precisely because the law can make no one righteous; but united in Christ we are made righteous. If the law can make us righteous, we have no need of Christ’s death, and Christ would not have come.

Any other cause attributed to Christ’s incarnation either is rooted in a false view of His person., or carries its own refutation with it. According to the Socinians, there was no necessity for Christ’s death, such as the apostle assumes to be conceded upon all sides, even by those whose additions tended to undermine it. Why did He die according to the text? Not to seal and confirm the truth of His
doctrine; for His doctrine was confirmed by miracles: not to teach us that we enter heaven by suffering, or to give us an example how to die; for martyrs could have done that without an incarnation: not to present to us, for the sustaining of our hope, a specimen of immortality and resurrection; for the word could hold forth that: but to bring in a justifying righteousness; and on any other supposition, He died without a cause.

III. We have next a passage descriptive of Christ made a curse for us; and of all the texts bearing on the atonement, there is none more decisive as to its nature: *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us*: *for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ* (Gal. 3:13). The context shows, that far from obtaining righteousness, the Galatians, by placing themselves on a legal footing (ver. 10), brought themselves under the curse. This is not the Levitical law, because it proposes life to those who fulfill it (ver. 12), and pronounces a curse on non-fulfillment (ver. 13). The apostle’s object is to bring out that the law awards a curse, not a reward, to those who place themselves on a footing of law; and this is contrasted with eternal life, the promised reward. For the correct apprehension of the atonement in its essential elements, we must strictly define this curse. It is the divine sentence pronounced upon transgressors, comprehending in it the loss of God as its chief ingredient, separation from Him (Isa. 59:2), and whatever positive infliction is further included. The Old Testament phraseology, from which the language is derived, takes in all that doom and shame which are the consequences of violating the divine law (Gen. 3:17–19; Deut. 27:14–26).

The text may be compared with another, to which it bears a strong resemblance, where Christ is said to have been made sin (2 Cor. 5:21). The abstract noun in both passages demands notice; for an abstract noun describes Christ as the sin-bearer, and an abstract noun describes Him as the curse-bearer. The Hebrews
were wont to take nouns in the abstract instead of adjectives, when they wished to intimate that a thing was done in the highest conceivable measure or degree. The expression MADE SIN FOR US is more emphatic and full of meaning than if Paul had said, MADE HIM A SINNER. It avoids, moreover, the misconception to which the latter term would have given rise, and allows us, according to the design of the passage, to distinguish between the personal and the official. In like manner, the expression BEING A CURSE FOR US is more emphatic and significant than if he had said, BEING MADE ACCURSED; while it enables us to distinguish between personal relation and official suretyship. The similarity between the two passages is obvious; and the difference is, that the former describes the imputation of sin, while the latter sets forth the actual doom or infliction. The former describes the relation of sin to punishment, the latter the punishment itself. 85

Let us look at four points from this passage that demand our attention.

1. The CURSE OF THE LAW does not mean temporal and civil punishments inflicted on Israel for the transgression of the judicial or ceremonial law. To interpret the expression in that way, is wholly to misapprehend its meaning. That there were such visitations, cannot be questioned by any one who has acquired a knowledge of the old dispensation (Deut. 28:15 ff.). These were evidences or proofs by which the people were trained to apprehend the divine wrath against the transgressors of His commandments; but it is a far deeper thought that is before the apostle’s mind. 86 As the context indubitably proves, the contrast is between wrath and blessing, between condemnation and justification. Besides, the Galatians to whom he wrote were Gentiles, not Jews; and it would have had no appropriateness, to bring before them an allusion to the dispensational peculiarities of Israel. The term CURSE, here used, comprehends the penal sanction of the moral law, and takes for granted that mankind generally, having the work of the law written on their hearts, and a law to themselves (Rom. 2:14),
were not less liable to the curse than the Jews: they were both equally under the curse.

2. From that curse Christ redeemed us, or, more strictly, bought us out. The word is a compound verb, denoting to buy out from one condition to transfer us into another. The question here arises, In what way, absolutely or by price? Plainly it is not an absolute deliverance, but one which is the result of purchase. No terms could more explicitly declare this; for the price or ransom is immediately subjoined, as in many other passages where reference is made to redemption (compare 1 Cor. 6:20 ; 1 Pet. 1:18 , 19 ). It was a true and real curse to which we were subjected: it is a true and real redemption into which we are ushered; and the price, too, by which it was effected—the intervention of the cross, or Christ made a curse for us—was a true and real price. The curse lay on Jew and Gentile equally; and the ransom which liberated us was the transfer of punishment, and an exchange of places between us and Christ. We could not have been redeemed from this obligation to the curse, involving as it did a reference to God as Lawgiver and Judge, had the cross been an expedient of an arbitrary nature, having nothing in common with the burden of the curse. That this is a commutation of persons, or deliverance by substitution, cannot be mistaken or denied.

3. The price or ransom paid for us was nothing else but the personal Redeemer, the Son of God condescending to be made A CURSE for US; a thought so vast and unfathomable, that though our minds grow familiar with the phraseology, we are for ever incapable of comprehending or fully surveying it. The ransom which liberated us was not His divine doctrine, nor His bright example of holiness left us to follow; for that would but throw humanity back upon its own resources, and could never be disjoined from dependence on works, or inner holiness. The apostle thinks of the ransom in a far other way: he identifies it with the Lord’s abasement and ignominious death as a vicarious satisfaction. He affirms that the price by which He discharged
us from temporal and eternal penalty was His being made a curse for us by entering into our position before God. That is the meaning of the participial clause (compare 2 Cor. 5:19): He was made the accumulated curse of His people, as if it were embodied in Him. God treated the sin–bearer as if He had been the sinner: that is, what the law awarded to us was visited upon Him; and by that substitution our redemption was secured. 88

This curse culminated in the wrath of God. And here I must take occasion to expose the unbiblical theory prevalent in a certain school of theologians at present, that the element of wrath did not enter into the atonement, and that Christ was in no sense the object of the wrath of God. It suffices to explode such a notion to direct attention to this single phrase, which conveys the opposite thought: Were not men under the wrath of God when they were under the curse? (Gal. 3:10; Eph. 2:3.) And WHEN CHRIST WAS MADE A CURSE, was He not, in an official respect, of necessity the object of divine wrath? The term used in the text has only to be alternated with the equivalent term, to convince any mind that the theory in question is no better than a neutralizing evasion, if not a contradiction of Scripture. That curse was the penal sanction of the law with which we were burdened, and from which we must needs be redeemed; and the words will bear no other comment. This transfer of punishment from us to Him is convincingly established by the context and by the structure of the sentence; and there is not room for two opinions on the subject. That curse was manifested in the infliction of death in its full extent of meaning, according to the primeval sentence on our race (Gal. 3:3–19). It consisted especially in the privation of God, and in the desertion, which extorted from Him many agonizing complaints; for the worst ingredient of the curse is the loss of God, or the absence and complete withdrawal of God from a human soul, made to be His habitation. That, in fact, is the bitterest element of eternal death, and through it the Surety was constrained to pass when made a curse for us. None but a divine person, indeed, was equal to the endurance; and none but a divine person could have engaged his heart to appear before God to
encounter the curse (Jer. 30:21). A God–man was required to bear it, to reverse it, and transform it into a blessing (ver. 14).

We must notice, before proceeding further, the quotation from the Mosaic law. Paul adduces it to ground what had been said, and to prove that death by crucifixion was not only painful and ignominious, but expressive of a divine curse: “For it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Deut. 21:22, 23). To understand this quotation grounding the previous statement, it is necessary to consider whether the particular law to which the apostle refers was intended to be symbolical, typical, and prophetical in its import. Expositors, following the uniform testimony of rabbinical writers, are mostly of opinion that crucifixion or the affixing of a living person by nails to a tree, and thus leaving him to expire by a slow and painful death, was a Gentile mode of punishment common among the Romans, but never in use among the Jewish people, while their institutions remained entire; and that the Mosaic law, in referring to the suspending of a criminal on a tree, had reference not to a living man, but to a dead body thus exposed to view till sunset,—after which the body was to be buried, not remaining all night upon the tree. On the other hand, Lipsius, Baronius, 89 and above all, Albert Schultens, contend with great learning that there is no good ground for the conclusion, that death by crucifixion was not in use in the times of the Hebrew commonwealth; and that the rabbinical writers in this instance, as in many others that might be named, discover a determination to wrest from the Christians such a remarkable type or typical prophecy of the crucified Messiah. Without entering into this controversy, let it suffice to say, that between hanging on a tree as described in the Mosaic law, and death by crucifixion, an obvious point of similarity exists, which no one can mistake. But besides the suspension—the point of resemblance—such a mode of death was not only ignominious in the sight of men, but meant to appear accursed in the sight of God: for the terms of the law are express to this effect. God, in His divine purpose, willed it to be so. As it was a positive appointment, it is not necessary to search for deeper reasons, least of all
for fanciful analogies; though the opinion expressed by many eminent divines, that this mode of death recalled the manner in which sin entered into the world, and by which the curse was diffused over the human race, is not unwarrantable. Our first parents sinned by the forbidden tree, and God, it is thought, willed that the reversal of the curse by the second Adam should be by hanging on a tree, that it might suggest the origin of the curse. Whatever ground may exist for this opinion, it was according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God that the curse should be expiated in no other way but by crucifixion or hanging on a tree.

But as to the special point, how the person hanging on a tree was accursed, there can be no doubt. It was a symbol, type, or prophecy. They who were thus punished were not accursed because they were hanged on a tree—a shallow comment which reduces it to nothing—but conversely, were hanged on a tree because they were accursed. It is necessary to lay stress on this, to forestall the notion that Paul, by applying this language to Christ, means nothing more than that there was an outward exposure and shame attaching to that mode of death. That is far from the apostle’s meaning, and far from a right conception of the symbol. He was not made a curse by the mere fact that He hung on a tree; but conversely, He was suspended there because He was made a curse for us; and the mode of punishment was first instituted to represent the idea now stated.

The Lawgiver, when He proclaimed that law by Moses, intended it to be typical as well as symbolical, or more strictly a typical prophecy. It figured forth a great idea, which had only to be apprehended by the first preachers of Christianity, and has only to be apprehended still, to impel men under the most constraining motive to boast of the cross, to admire the cross, and to commend the cross as the power of God and wisdom of God. In the eyes of men, crucifixion was in the highest degree ignominious,—a servile punishment inflicted on the lowest scum of the people, when they expiated their crimes by death. On freemen it was never
inflicted till they were degraded from their rank, and classified with slaves; and then it was awarded only for the worst crimes committed against civil order and law, property, religion, and government. The stigma attaching to such a death, accordingly, was the same as now attaches to one who expiates great crimes upon the gallows. This was the Gentile conception of such a death. But according to the Jewish law, it carried with it the further brand of being accursed in the sight of God; and the fact of dying such a death was doubtless one principal ground why the nation esteemed Christ stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. The law made such a death emphatically an accursed one; and were they not to view it in that light? Accordingly, the common name for Jesus among the Jews to the present day, THE HANGED ONE, sufficiently shows how they think themselves entitled to regard the crucifixion.

In giving such a law by Moses, God meant it to be a typical prophecy, as well as symbolical of curse–bearing. In the same way, the lifting up of the brazen serpent on the pole was meant in the divine purpose to adumbrate the crucifixion, whether many or few saw beyond the figure to the Antitype. Among the forms of punishment mentioned in the law, that of hanging on a tree was pronounced accursed, because it figured forth the cross, and announced that the Messiah should one day hang upon a tree. The question is not, how many could decipher the symbol and the typical prophecy, but was that in the divine intention? And the apostle’s quotation of the passage in this connection is decisive in the affirmative. Both the symbol and the type are equally emphatic. The cross was the expression of an idea,—a sort of fact–painting, an evidence or exhibition that the person suspended on it was already accursed, or a curse in the sight of God. Not that the tree was the cause of the curse; for the accursed one was suspended on the tree. This was an outstanding public testimony to a fact, and in this case a testimony that the Lord was burdened with the world’s curse, and weighed down under its overwhelming load.
4. The CURSE–BEARING paved the way for THE BLESSING (ver. 14). These two are directly contrasted, and the one is in order to the other. The curse under which we labored was removed, that the blessing might be imparted. The curse laid on the Lord opened the channel of communication for the reception of the blessing; out of that redemption from the curse of the law, flows the blessing which comes upon the Gentiles (ver. 14).

To all this exposition three objections are commonly urged by those who impugn the atonement as a substitution and satisfaction. And we must advert to them, though they are easy of refutation to any one who apprehends the sin–bearing office of the Lord. The same objections were propounded by the first Socinians three centuries ago, and they are reproduced and repeated by modern writers, with little change of expression.

(1.) It is objected that the apostle, in speaking of liberation from the curse of the law, had respect only to the Jews. This is groundless. Paul refers to men, of whatever nation, who were under the curse of the law, or under the wrath of God, revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men (Rom. 1:18). What is the apostle’s object in the Epistle to the Romans but to prove this? But, to confine ourselves to the text before us, he aims to show that they who are redeemed share in the blessing, and that curse–bearing on the part of Christ was with a view to the blessing which comes on the Gentiles also (ver. 14). When the apostle says, “He hath redeemed us,” nothing can warrant us to conclude, with Socinians and many modern exegetes, that he has in his eye Jews more than Gentiles. No antithesis of nationality is intended when the apostle says, “He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles.” When the apostle, writing to Gentiles, names himself as comprehended in the class of those who are sharers in redemption, the terms us, or WE, or OUR, can never be applied to Jews alone. We do not find a single case
where the apostle, after his conversion, puts himself into the category of the Jews, except where he alludes to his past; for his nationality, his Judaism, his former course, are all absorbed in the new relation. And every supposed classification of himself among the Jews should be otherwise explained. We do not hesitate to lay down this canon. Besides, the most rudimentary inquirer into the scope of the epistles is aware that they were written to Christ’s disciples, to redeemed men, or such as professed to be so. Wherever the apostle, then, makes use of this style of language, including himself in the class of men to whom he speaks of doctrine, privilege, or duty, he writes to Christ’s disciples as such, but neither to Jews nor Gentiles apart. Moreover, the Galatians to whom he wrote were Gentiles. 91

It is a low comment of the Rationalists, that we are redeemed from the yoke of the Mosaic law. With that shallow interpretation many satisfy themselves,—supposing Paul to say that, so long as he was a Jew, he was subject to the Mosaic law, from which he was now redeemed; or, as others expound it, exposed to the constant risk of falling under the terrible penalties of the law, but was now free. In refutation of this comment, it may suffice to say that, however applicable in other connections, it is here out of place; for the passage does not affirm that Christ redeemed us from all obedience to the law, or from all relation to the law, but from its curse. The language is definite: it refers to the condemning, sentence or punishment awarded by the law, whether we have regard to what is temporal or eternal. The meaning is, that Christ bought us out or redeemed us from the penalty; the language having reference to the custom of redeeming a captive or slave by ransom. The figure was peculiarly appropriate.

(2.) A second objection by the opponents of vicarious satisfaction is, that Christ is not said to have borne the SAME CURSE, the same elements of penal visitation, under which those lie who are burdened with the curse of the law. They hold that it was different in kind; and, in a word, that so far as Christ was concerned, it had not the nature of a curse, and contained nothing of penal infliction at the hand of God. They allow that He bore
the suffering of the cross as inflicted by the hand of man, but admit no deeper element of punitive infliction at the hand of God. Their shallow comment is reduced to this, that, according to the law, the mode of death by crucifixion had a certain brand or stigma attached to it, not as an exponent of a deeper idea, but simply as a name among men or in common estimation. Thus the mere name or fact of the crucifixion is, according to them, all the curse. In support of this view, it has been ingeniously argued in modern times that the apostle does not say of Christ, “being made THIS CURSE,” which, it is allowed, would mean the curse of the law; and they allege that since it is said, “BEING made A curse for us,” the interpretation which explains the clause of substitution and penal SUFFERING must fall to the ground.

The question whether our curse was removed from us and laid on Christ, must be dealt with in a DIFFERENT way. We cannot but resent this interpretation as unfair—as an exegetical violence which the structure of the sentence will not endure. It is a deliberate attempt to explain away the simple and natural relation of the clauses. The apostle did not need to say, “being made THIS CURSE for us.” Nay, it might have been liable to misapprehension, more especially as the quotation from the Mosaic law was to be immediately subjoined. But the Holy Ghost knows how to use the most appropriate words, and to put them in the clearest setting. First, mention is made of the curse of the law awarded to transgressors; next, it is announced that we were liberated or discharged from that curse; thirdly, putting cause and EFFECT together, the apostle affirms that such a RESULT was brought about by Christ becoming a curse for us. Words cannot more explicitly teach that HE WAS MADE OUR CURSE, and that the means of redemption was Christ’s intervention as a curse–bearer. That is convincingly brought out in the passage; and we may affirm, in the words of Dr. South, who in one of his sallies remarks upon this text: “Scripture must be crucified as well as Christ, to give any other tolerable sense of the expressions.”
But might it not be Paul’s intention to say that Christ suffered what made HIM APPEAR AS ACCURSED? Might he not mean that Christ was represented to men as a curse, appearing as if He were so, or so reputed in men’s esteem? No: the statement would then be no longer an objective one. We are not so to weaken or reduce the import of the expressions. They set forth A REAL and not A SEEMING CONNECTION between sin–bearing and curse–bearing. All the menace or penal sanction of the law was discharged on the Lord as our substitute. And the passage brings out what Christ was IN God’s ACCOUNT and by God’s appointment, not what He was in man’s repute, and as He was treated by the hands of men. The absence of the definite article, or of the demonstrative pronoun THIS, does not warrant us to think of any other curse, or any modification or alteration of the specific curse incurred by us, and necessarily inflicted for the violation of the divine law. It is not to be rendered nor interpreted A CURSE LIKE THAT WHICH IS pronounced by the law upon transgressors, and conveying merely the idea of similarity or resemblance. That were but another form of the metaphorical or figurative theory of the atonement, with which the Socinianizing opponents of substitution and satisfaction rest content. But we cannot stop short there. The entire connection proves that it is THE VERY CURSE OF THE BROKEN LAW, the very infliction impending over us, and struck by God’s own hand, to which Paul refers. We are not to take the words as meaning that His enemies executed Him by a malefactor’s death; for it was GOD Himself, and not His enemies, that made Him a curse.

(3.) The third objection is, that Christ could not be said to be a curse for us in the sense of undergoing THE VERY PENALITY IN OUR STEAD, because it was eternal death,—a doom which they allege He could not undergo, as He must rise AGAIN. That objection could not be propounded but by men who neither recognized the divine person of the Lord, nor apprehended the infinite value of His sufferings. But in point of dignity and value, the penal sufferings of such a person, though limited in duration, were equivalent to eternal punishment; for His divine nature had an influence on His sufferings, and put Him in a position such as no mere
man could ever occupy. We find, accordingly, that Scripture in many passages fixes attention on His personal dignity, and deduces from it the unspeakable value of His sufferings (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 2:8; 1 John 1:7). Finite creatures could give no satisfaction, however lasting the duration of their sufferings; whereas the divine dignity of the Redeemer counterbalanced the duration of the curse. In intensive merit, it was thus a full equivalent to eternal death. And we may add that the endless punishment of the sinner would not be necessary, were he adequate to endure infinite wrath in combination with the other conditions which a satisfaction presupposes.

Christ’s whole career was marked by vicarious curse–bearing and we have to notice what it involved. Properly considered, the entire life of the Lord, from the manger to the cross, or rather to the grave, was a course of sinless curse–bearing because a course of sin–bearing. He was visited with the penal consequences of sin, with its curse and wages, from the day when He entered into humanity by incarnation. Already we have proved at large that Christ, through His entire earthly history, was conscious of occupying the position of a sin–bearing substitute; and where sin was, there too the curse was, its inevitable accompaniment. The term CURSE expresses the penal sanction of the law; and when Christ is so designated, the import is, that the curse, following the violation of the law, was executed on Him. It has therefore everything in common with condemnation and wrath. We must, however, distinguish several things when we speak of Christ made a curse in our room and stead, lest no definite or correct idea should be formed of the language.

a. We must distinguish between the personal and the official in this mysterious transaction. Inconsiderate and revolting phraseology has been sometimes here employed by certain ill–balanced minds. God certainly did not view the Redeemer as the sinner must needs be viewed, when the latter comes under the full infliction of the divine curse. He did not regard Him personally in any other
light than as His beloved Son, on whom He looked with infinite complacency, as at once His righteous Servant and His only Son. But as the surety of His people, the Lord descended into the lowest abyss of that curse which we had incurred, and tasted death, the penalty of sin, that we might never taste of it.

b. Nor was it only in His death that He was made a curse for us, though it culminated upon the cross; for the curse of God, the penal sanction of the divine law, was expressed in Christ’s life as well as in His death. The outline or tenor of the curse, sketched in Genesis in the narrative of the fall and its doom, may be read off in every particular from the earthly history of the Lord. The labor, sorrow, and death denounced on man in that primeval curse, may be seen in Christ in every variety of form in which they could possibly attach to the incarnate Son. In toil and grief, in frailty and fainting, in hunger and thirst, in want and weariness, in bearing the likeness of sinful flesh, we can trace this curse-bearing—the unfailing attendant of sin-bearing. His earthly career was, in fact, pervaded by it at every step. Though He saw no corruption, either living or dead—for sickness or disease could not, as a personal quality, attach to the sinless One—He knew by sympathy, and in some mysterious way, too, by the miraculous healing of disease, what that part of the curse comprehended. His death was a curse-bearing death, involving all the elements of the second or eternal death, so far as the privative sense, the loss of God, is concerned—that heaviest part of a God-inflicted curse. Such a death alone could be an adequate equivalent for the curse of the law due to transgressors.

c. It is evidently identical with the curse awarded to the violators of the law. There is only one divine curse, and it is ours, but transferred to a Substitute who was exempt from it on every ground, whether we think of His divine dignity or sinless perfection. Whether, therefore, we consider the structure of this passage, or the nature of the transaction itself, we find a full proof that it was vicarious curse-bearing; and all the efforts made by the opponents of substitution to wrest this passage from the church—and no means have been left unused.
—are utterly futile. They are a complete failure if we abide by Scripture, grammatically expounded, as our sole court of appeal. The words can convey no other meaning but this, that the Lord Jesus underwent the penalty we had merited, and was treated as an accursed person in our stead, and so freed us from the curse by vicariously bearing it.

IV. Another passage, parallel to the former, but with an extension of the idea, is as follows: When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman made under the law, to redeem them, that are under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons (Gal. 4:4). Redemption from the curse of the law was the scope of the former passage; redemption from the law itself, considered in its covenant form, or as the condition of life, is the scope of this.

1. The fullness of time, at which the atonement was accomplished, is here noticed. It may suffice to say, that though we cannot enumerate all the elements that entered into that fullness, some are on the surface. A fact so stupendous was not to be ushered in as an abrupt phenomenon, without a preparatory economy of type and prophecy, by means of which a circle of ideas and a peculiar phraseology might be formed to bring it home to men’s minds, both before the incarnation and after it. A sufficient reason must also appear why such a provision was necessary; and this necessity required to be historically displayed in the failure of human schemes. Not only art and education, culture and civilization, but divine law itself, must be tried. They were tried, and found inadequate to meet the case.

2. The sending forth of the Son of God is next mentioned as the presupposition or foundation of the ransom. The expressions here used unambiguously affirm that the Son existed as a divine person with God, and very God, before He came to be made of woman. He was sent, in the exercise of love, by the first person of the
Godhead; and no one interpreting words as they stand, can permit himself to reduce them to the tame, flat sense, that Jesus was but a man. Here He is marked out as divine. His mission, and the possession of the divine nature, were not precisely the ransom, but the presupposition of the ransom, giving it infinite value, and rendering it applicable to the wants of millions. But no ingredient of the penal sanction of the law, or of the positive obedience, could be dispensed with on that account. It was of necessity the work of a God–man, but true human suffering and obedience.

3. The next gradation as here stated was, that Christ WAS MADE OF WOMAN. It might pass without challenge on philological grounds, were we to translate the clause BORN OF WOMAN; though it cannot be disguised that the latter is preferred by many, in the interest of an erroneous tendency, viz. that they may escape from the doctrine of the supernatural conception of Jesus. The true rendering is, MADE OF WOMAN; and the language implies, that as the Son He had another mode of existence, but became something that He was not. The divine side of Christ’s person has been already noticed: here Paul teaches with equal clearness His true humanity. The incarnation of the Lord is here presented to us as a divine fact, the deed of God the Father; elsewhere it is spoken of as the Redeemer’s own act (2 Cor. 8:9). By naming a human mother from whom the Lord derived His human nature, the apostle plainly meant to announce His true and perfect humanity, but in terms which fully coincide with the acknowledged fact of His being virgin–born. Christ’s derivation of humanity from Adam through His mother is no small or unimportant matter in connection with His atonement: for His fraternity, as our kinsman Redeemer, absolutely depends upon the fact that He derived His humanity from the substance of His mother; and without this He would neither possess the natural nor legal union with His people, which must lie at the foundation of His representative character. To be our GOEL or redeeming kinsman, the humanity with which He was invested could neither be brought from heaven, nor be immediately created by the Godhead, but derived, as ours is, from a human mother; with this
difference, that the Lord’s humanity never existed in Adam’s covenant, to entail either guilt or taint upon Him personally. He must be within the pale of mankind, yet its second man, or second representative; personally exempt from every charge and from every defilement descending from the first man, but freely assuming guilt by a federal engagement in our stead. His was real humanity, but sinless,—a body incorruptible, and a reasonable soul without a taint of imperfection; and this woman–born or virgin–born Redeemer, with no personal responsibilities derived from the first Adam, spontaneously engaged to assume them by consenting to be the second Adam.

4. The next thing mentioned in the text, and a further step, is: MADE UNDER THE LAW. This clause affirms that Christ was made under the law for the sake of those who were under the law, and therefore not on His own account or from any personal obligation. Had He been personally subject to it, then His obedience could only have availed to His personal release or discharge. But there was this difference between Christ and us, that we were born under the law by the condition of creaturehood, while He was spontaneously made under it for the ends of suretyship.

This clause demands special notice on another ground. It is affirmed in certain quarters, and especially by those who do not admit the evidence for Christ’s active obedience, that the apostle does not; here name the ransom, but leaves it to be sought in the previous passage relating to the curse (Gal. 3:13). That is by no means the case; and an analysis of the words may convince any one that the ransom or equivalent is as definitely named as in the other passage. The statement that Christ made a curse refers to His passive obedience; this statement, that He was made under the law, refers to His active as well as suffering obedience, or to the fulfilling of the law in action and suffering. The PRICE of redemption is therefore named, and it is nothing but His incarnation and subjection to the law. The opinion that reconciliation and redemption are effected by the death of
Christ, to the exclusion of His active obedience, is thus in collision with this passage, and with many other parts of Scripture (Rom. 5:19). When Christ was made under the law, it was with a view to that meritorious obedience by which we are accounted righteous, and treated as righteous. 93

The active obedience considered as our ransom, or a constituent element of the ransom, has encountered many futile objections. Thus some oppose it on the general ground that the law was not applicable to non–Jews, but confined to Israel. But however some portions of the law might be limited to Israel, the moral law, adapted to man as man, and the reflection of the divine nature, was but a republication of the law of nature. It is preposterous to speak of this element, the core and essence of the whole, as limited to Jews, when it was not arbitrary, but eternal, and must needs receive its fulfillment AS THE CONDITION OF LIFE (Gal. 3:12). The obedience to it was necessary alike for Gentiles and for Jews.

It is further alleged by modern exegetes, that the expression MADE UNDER THE LAW means no more than to be born a Jew. That is by no means the idea which the apostle expresses, nor does such an interpretation reach the meaning. Christ’s mission and subjection to the law were in order to redeem us: the one was the way to the other, as appears from the final particle, which connects the last clause of the one verse (ver. 4) with the first clause of the following verse (ver. 5). We cannot translate “born a Jew,” 94 because the relation of the means to the design would be absolutely imperceptible; whereas the apostle, by the repetition of the same words, intends to make it plain. Moreover, it must be noticed, that if we translate the words “born a Jew” in the one verse (ver. 4), we must, on all grounds of consistency, translate the same words in the same way in the next verse (ver. 5). And what sense would be conveyed by the clauses thus rendered, “born a Jew, to redeem them that were born Jews,”—as if He came only to redeem the Jews? Nor does the absurdity end there. The next clause, also expressive of design, and introduced by a final particle, introduces a wider
reference when it says, “that we might receive the adoption of sons.” All this is
natural and obvious, when we apprehend that redemption by Christ’s atonement
and obedience paves the way to the further blessing of adoption. But on the other
mode of interpretation, the sequence of thought would be as follows: Christ was
born a Jew, to redeem them that were born Jews, that we (the Gentile Galatians as
well as Paul) might receive the adoption of sons. The redemption of the Jews is
made the cause of the adoption of the Gentiles. That is so absurd, that it needs no
remark. But all is plain and significant when we take the words as already
expounded, and remember that the essential elements of the law were written on
the conscience of the Gentiles (Rom. 2:15).

In the Pauline epistles, where the expression UNDER THE LAW several times
occurs, it is always equivalent to being subject to the law (Rom. 3:19, 6:14, 15;
Gal. 4:21, 5:18; 1 Cor. 9:20). In all these passages the expression has one
uniform sense: it denotes subjection to the law, with the accessory idea that it has
something burdensome and oppressive. These several passages are not to be
mingled and confounded. But one thing is evident: it is not a mere circumlocution
for a Jew. The meaning is, that God sent His Son, made under the law, for the
redemption of those who were under the law in all its breadth of meaning. Now
Jews and Gentiles were equally under the law, as the condition of life, by the fact
of creaturehood (Rom. 2:14, 3:9).

Two things are comprehended. The first is, that the Lord Jesus, when made under
the law for our deliverance, must have fulfilled all its claims, according to the
terms. And as we were bound, according to essential human relations, to the
strictest obedience on the one hand, and to the endurance of the curse on the
other—that is, to the precept and the penalty—the apostle affirms that both were
fulfilled by Christ in our room (Gal. 3:10, 12). The second point is, that whatever Christ rendered in this capacity was done as
our substitute, and for the benefit of those who were under the law. The objection
of those who impugn the element of active obedience as part of the Lord’s atoning work is, that Christ was under obligation as man to obey for Himself, like every rational creature. The answer to this, as it was uniformly given by the Lutheran, and also by the best Reformed divines, on the ground of such passages as the present, was that humanity was assumed by the Son of God into the unity of His person, to be an instrument or organ in His work; that it existed only in the person of the Son, and never apart from Him; that the law as such had no competent authority over the Son of God, who was Himself the lawgiver; that His human nature, also called the Son of God, was not under the law but exempt from it in any covenant form; and therefore that He was made under the law, not because He had a human nature, but because He willed to be under it, to finish a work of obedience which might be given away to those who had none. This was meritorious obedience, and given to us as a donation.

5. The fruit or benefit derived from Christ’s subjection to the law is our redemption and, at a second remove, our adoption. The two final clauses, which refer to these two blessings as the fruit of Christ’s ransom, may be co–ordinate, as some view them, or subordinated in this sense, that one paves the way for the other. Both clauses, however, refer without distinction to Jews and Gentiles. By the obedience of Christ both are equally redeemed: then follows the blessing of adoption, of which the further result is the sending forth of the Spirit of adoption into our hearts ( ver. 6 ).

V. The apostle strikingly utters his view of the atonement, when he declares, in contrast to the errorists, who adhered to rites, ceremonies, and legal observances: *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world* ( Gal. 6:14 ). From the fullness of his heart, as a man and apostle, he declares his attachment to the cross, that is, to Christ crucified as the only ground of acceptance, discarding all supplementary additions with holy zeal. He elsewhere affirms that boasting is excluded ( Rom. 3:27 ); but legal boasting is displaced, that glorying in the
Lord, or glorying in Christ crucified, may begin (see 1 Cor. 1:30). Only two things demand notice here as bearing on our theme.

1. The cross, viewed as a propitiatory sacrifice, is described as the sole ground of a Christian’s boast or glorying. The antithesis in which the words occur repudiates every other plea but the finished work of the cross, but also implies that there is a boasting in which the Christian can never go too far or indulge too frequently. He gloried in the cross as the expiation of sin, the fulfillment of the law, the cause of reconciliation, the ransom of the church, the propitiation for our sins, and the sacrificial blood which brings us near and keeps us near to God in worship.

2. The fruit of the atonement is a twofold crucifixion. The relative clause, commencing with BY WHOM, may either refer to the personal Savior, according to the rendering of the English version, or to the cross, BY WHICH this result is gained. These two clauses denote the dissolution of relations between Paul and the world, effected by the cross. The first clause, THE WORLD IS CRUCIFIED TO ME, means that it became to him unwelcome, distasteful, undesirable, like a crucified person. It was nailed to the cross, whether we suppose the allusion is to the world’s attractions or to its legal righteousness. In both respects it was crucified, and influenced him as little as a dead man or dead thing could do. But it is added, I AM CRUCIFIED TO THE WORLD. That clause is commonly interpreted, The world has cast me out, as no object of its favor, and as alien to it. The two clauses will thus set forth respectively Paul’s estimate of the world, and the world’s estimate of him. This is the usual interpretation of the clauses, and amounts to this: that Paul looked on the world, from the view–point of the cross, as an object that no more commended itself to him; and that the world, conversely, accounted him as worthy of contempt, because he so strenuously commended and enforced the one grand object of a sinner’s confidence,—namely, Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling–block and to the
Greeks foolishness.

The latter part of this commentary does not seem so appropriate or adapted to the apostle’s design. His object was not so much to describe what the world thought of him, as how he stood affected to the world. The second clause, AND I TO THE WORLD, seems rather to intimate that, by the potentiality inherent in the cross, in so far as it rectified his relation toward God, and brought in new life to his soul, he was dead to the world. If the former clause affirmed that the world, as surveyed from the cross in which he gloried, was as a dead and crucified object in his esteem, the present clause will rather set forth that HIS HEART WAS DEAD TO IT. Another object had so won his heart, that his tastes, desires, and sympathies were, as it were, dead within him, so far as the world was concerned. He drew no confidence from the legal rites, which were but elements of the world in his esteem (Gal. 4:3), and had no hankering or looking behind in reference to its allurements and attractions. He did not dally with the world, or maintain any relations with it, when he saw how alien it was to the aims and aspirations of one who gloried in Christ crucified, and who was himself crucified with his Lord (Gal. 2:20). This latter thought, that the apostle was crucified with Christ, and therefore one who no longer sought his life in the world (Col. 2:20), will enable us to apprehend the force of the expression. It is this: Paul was personally dead to the world, because by the cross he was the property of another,—one of the peculiar people or heritage that Christ had won by His atoning blood. Paul felt that he was OBJECTIVELY CRUCIFIED with Christ, and his INNER FEELINGS corresponded to the change. He no more sought that world, nor lived for it, than a dead man is attracted by its honours, pleasures, or emoluments; and it was the cross that made the great revolution.
Section 7.—The Epistle to the Ephesians.

The Epistle to the Ephesians and the Epistle to the Colossians have a close affinity to each other, as developing the Pauline Christology. 98 They put the atonement in contrast with an incipient Gnosticism, which substituted ideas or mere speculative knowledge for the realities of Christ’s work. In some epistles, as in that to the Romans, Paul appears as the expounder of divine truth in its wide connections. In others—as in the Epistles to the Corinthians, Timothy, and Titus—he appears as the pastor, issuing counsels, admonitions, and directions. In these Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians there is a certain reference to the oriental speculations then beginning to thrust themselves on the notice of the Christian church; and Paul, in displaying his knowledge in the mystery of Christ ( Eph. 3:4 ), appears more as the prophet giving abundant fullness of spiritual revelations. The principal thought of these epistles is the personal Christ, the medium of divine communications, Head over all things to the church, uniting Jew and Gentile under Himself as their one Head, and the link connecting all things with God and with one another. On these points we have striking revelations, nowhere else so fully imparted.

Allusions to the atonement run through the Epistle to the Ephesians, even where no express statements are given as to its nature. Thus, in the reference to Christ’s love, we cannot fail to see an underlying allusion to His atonement ( Eph. 3:18 ). When the thought is brought in, “Now, that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?” We have an allusion to His atonement as the foundation of His throne ( Eph. 4:9 ). When mutual forgiveness is enforced by the consideration that God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven us, that forgiveness is connected with the work of Christ ( 4:32 ). But omitting passages
which assume the atonement rather than express it, we shall confine ourselves to those which are definite.

I. The first passage on the subject of the atonement is thus expressed: *in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace* (Eph. 1:7). The apostle celebrates God’s praise for spiritual blessings, for election in Christ, and for all contemplated by election (Eph. 1:3). When we analyze the structure of the sentence, he does not say BY WHOM, as he usually does, to denote the meritorious cause, but IN WHOM. The words IN CHRIST sometimes mean union, when the words have an independent position, and can be taken apart (2 Cor. 12:2). Here, however, the expression IN WHOM denotes in His person objectively, as the surety or ground of our salvation. For Christ is a public person, and we have redemption in a way similar and parallel to the condemnation which we have in Adam. In a word, redemption is set forth objectively in Christ’s person, who of God is made to us redemption (1 Cor. 1:30). All the expressions coincide with this interpretation; for it is not said that we ACQUIRE redemption, but that we HAVE IT in Him (ecomen). The testimony of this passage may be taken up in the following points:—

1. The apostle not only mentions the redemption, but subjoins the ransom, THE BLOOD of Him who had just been called the Beloved. This establishes the reality of both. The language is not a metaphor or similitude, according to the Socinian comment; it means that we are redeemed by blood as a ransom. The original term denotes deliverance by a price; and the obvious sense is, that we are redeemed from a REAL captivity, by a REAL, not a figurative ransom. The theory of a metaphor makes but a metaphorical salvation.
As to the features of the doctrine as set forth by these expressions. The first and fundamental idea is, that man as a sinner has fallen under punitive justice, which holds him captive. The second thought is, that the ransom is Christ’s vicarious death, or His blood considered as the reality of the ancient sacrifices, and procuring the full redemption which they but figured forth. He gave Himself a ransom to redeem His people (Matt. 20:28; 1 Cor. 6:20; 1 Tim. 2:6); and this He effected by becoming their curse (Gal. 3:13). A third idea is, that God, to whose Justice the price was paid, secured the discharge or liberation of the captive. As the law was an institution for the maintenance of which justice watched, this decides a question more frequently adduced for polemical purposes than for any other object: To whom was the ransom paid—to God or to Satan? The answer is, Satan had nothing to do with it, being the mere jailer, nay, criminal himself. The ransom was paid to the punitive justice of God. The statement then is, that the personal Christ is of God made to us redemption, and that we have redemption IN HIM.

2. Forgiveness of sin is subjoined in an apposition–clause, as a convertible term. The redemption consists essentially in forgiveness; and the latter, in its grammatical connection, sets forth more precisely the import of the former. They are here adduced as equivalent and convertible. It is evident, in the first place, that a direct causal connection is affirmed between the blood of Christ and forgiveness of sins. The passage does not state that Christ’s mission was to reveal an absolute forgiveness, and to seal His testimony by His death as a martyr. The two things are put in such connection, that the forgiveness can only be viewed as the direct and immediate result of the atoning death, as the blood of sacrifice in the old economy was the direct cause of forgiveness to the Jewish worshipper. Christ’s blood alone, without any addition of ours, or works of law, had the effect of winning forgiveness or exemption from punishment.

But how are redemption and forgiveness made convertible terms? Might we not
rather expect to hear that the redemptive act of Christ was the cause of forgiveness? Undoubtedly a connection of cause and effect is affirmed in the verse, as we have already noticed. But there is a sense in which the redemption of the one clause, and the forgiveness which explains it in the next clause, have an objective reality for us in Christ as a public person; and this is the point of the expression. As was noticed above, there was a NON–IMPUTATION OF SIN to us at the time when Christ was made SIN for us (2 Cor. 5:19–21), and the two things went hand in hand. That non–imputation of sin to us was not a mere subsequent result of Christ’s sacrifice, but in some sense an essential element of the Lord’s redemptive act. It had an application to all for whom He died, and whose person He representatively sustained.

3. The passage further shows the consistency between Christ’s atoning blood, the price of pardon, and the exercise of free grace. Though it has been much urged that one of these elements must of necessity exclude the other, both are here affirmed, and perfectly consistent. Though not found together in human transactions, they are found in the moral government of God; for the divine administration differs from that of man in this respect, that God’s rights are inalienable. He could not recede from His rights even when He purposed to redeem and pardon, but vindicated them to the full; and this single text meets all cavils against the consistency of these two things—complete satisfaction and free grace. While pardon, therefore, is to us a gratuitous gift, it was procured by the payment of a price.

II. Another testimony, having reference to the effect of Christ’s death in reconciling Jew and Gentile to each other, because reconciling both to God, is contained in the next chapter: But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who were far off are now made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in His flesh
the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that He might reconcile both to God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby ( Eph. 2:13–16 ). Throughout this chapter the apostle brings under our notice a twofold alienation and a twofold reconciliation, with a sketch of the method by which the disunion was brought to an end. On the one hand, there was from their birth a deep alienation of mankind from God ( vers. 3, 12 ), along with a division between Jews and Gentiles. On the other hand, the apostle refers to the historic fact of Christ’s atonement as a divinely instituted method by which men, disunited by mutual hostility, meet in a higher unity, and become one new man ( ver. 15 ), one city of God ( ver. 19 ), one temple or habitation of God ( ver. 21 ). I shall endeavour, with all brevity, to set forth the testimony here given to the atonement in its nature and effects, omitting such points as do not directly bear upon the theme which engages our attention.

1. Regarding the nature of the atonement, Paul’s expressions are weighty with significance apart from their immediate context. However, they are used so often and with such force in reaction to incipient Gnosticism and the heresy of Doceticism. The Gnostics denied the value of matter, thus Christ’s incarnation, and paut forth false theories on the essence of the Trinity. The Docetics also denied the materiality of Jesus Christ, and claimed He possessed a “phantom body.” But we shall enumerate Paul’s expressions regarding the atonement apart from their immediate context.

The apostle connects the atonement with the personal Redeemer when he declares, in the first place, “HE is our peace,” and describes the Lord as “slaying the enmity in Himself.” Secondly, he shows that the atonement was connected with a true humanity or corporeity, endowed with a capacity of suffering and obedience, when he says, “that He might reconcile both IN ONE BODY,” for the allusion is to the procuring of redemption, not to its application; and it is more
natural to expound the phrase of CHRIST’S HUMAN BODY, than of His body the church. Thirdly, when the enmity is said to be abolished “in His flesh,” the language refers, as in other passages, to the condition of abasement and penal curse–bearing, to which the atoning Lord spontaneously subjected Himself. Fourthly, when it is said, “that He might reconcile both THROUGH THE CROSS,” the meaning is that the curse, of which the cross was the exponent, was borne and exhausted on the tree. Fifthly, the blood of Christ, the cause of bringing us near to God, is described as sacrificial blood (ver. 13). All these descriptive terms serve to prove that the atonement was the surrender of Himself to God in a true humanity.

But a further idea here is, that Christ stood as a public person—AS ONE FOR MANY. The representative character of the transaction cannot be mistaken; for the redeemed church is here considered as found in Him who, according to covenant, bore their persons and occupied their place, and, as a responsible surety, represented them before God. He sustained their persons in His own body on the cross; that is, He, as a public person, in one body, sustained, through life and in death, the responsibilities of those who are described as His church. In His one humanity, He represented all who had been given Him, and reconciled them on the cross. Thus all is run up to the person of Christ. The whole person atoned,—the humanity suffering, the deity giving it worth; the action being that of the God–man. The entire person acted in the atonement as in every mediatorial act,—the humanity being obedient, and the deity giving infinite value to all He did.

2. As to the fruits of the atonement, of which several are mentioned in these verses, the first in order is NEARNESS TO GOD IN THE BLOOD OF CHRIST (ver. 13). It is by no means necessary to alter the force of the preposition: for the same expression is used by our Lord at the institution of the Supper, “This is the new covenant IN MY BLOOD” (1 Cor. 11:25); intimating that Christ’s atoning blood was the element,
sphere, or medium IN WHICH the new covenant was formed, and in which, as it is here put, they who were far off are made nigh. The language refers to sacrificial blood, which put men in covenant with God. Thus Israel at Sinai was by the sprinkling of blood made the people of God, near to Him, and from year to year preserved in covenant by the blood sprinkled on the mercy-seat. The expression “far from God,” or “far off,” was a phrase in common use to designate the Gentiles ( Isa. 49:1; Acts 2:39 ); and the statement is, that the blood of atonement made those nigh who were far off, or put them in covenant relation to God, as members of a spiritual society of which Christ is the head.

3. As another fruit of the atonement, the title OUR PEACE is ascribed to Christ ( ver. 14 ). Some interpret this as meaning the cause of our peace, or our peacemaker, which gives a competent sense. More precisely, however, the title refers to Christ as our peace or reconciliation objectively considered, and with regard to our relation toward God; the present verse being a grounding statement, with the causal particle for, to show the foundation of our nearness. The primary import, according to the analogy of numerous passages, is, that Christ is objectively our peace, 101 as He is also called our righteousness and redemption ( 1 Cor. 1:30 ). But while He is pre–eminently our peace toward God, He is also the ground and foundation of peace in every other relation; as, for instance, between man and man.

4. As another fruit; of the atonement, an end was put to the Jewish law, considered as A PARTITION–WALL between Jew and Gentile. The law was so called, either, as many think, from the wall or fence in the temple which shut out the Gentiles from the access which the Jewish worshippers enjoyed; or, as others think, from the fence by which one city or territory was walled off from another. The ceremonial law given to Israel as a separate people, and of positive appointment, was capable of being removed when its purpose was served; being destined to continue only till the reality or true sacrifice which it foreshadowed
should appear. Accordingly the cross, in which the law found its accomplishment, put a period to the ceremonies. They were not simply revoked, but fulfilled: the atonement of the cross terminated the ceremonies, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for ever.

5. The atonement made JEW AND GENTILE ONE (ver. 15). Previously the Jews regarded the Gentiles as unclean, and the Gentiles on their side retaliated by every mark of contumely, branding the Jews as the common enemies of the human race. By means of the cross, they who previously were sundered met in a higher unity, on a platform above and beyond the causes of division; and as they stood on the same level of reconciliation, they became one new man in Christ (ver. 15), who reconciled them in one body by the cross (ver. 16). The atonement terminated the alienation, placing men on a footing of equality before the throne of God; and this was effected really, not typically, by the cross, which gave to all nationalities the position of a people near to God, and made Jews and Gentiles one.

6. The explicit biblical expression for the effect of the atonement is reconciliation in all relations, as expressed in these words: “That He might reconcile both unto God in one body BY the cross, having slain the enmity in Himself” (ver. 16). This full description may be taken up in four points of inquiry.

a. Who are the parties reconciled? The answer is, God on the one side; and the twofold nationality, that is, Jews and Gentiles, on the other. Nothing can be more explicit than this declaration that Christ’s coming was intended to reconcile two parties,—the one party being God, and the other party mankind; and the obvious presupposition is, that beforehand disunion existed between God and man. Now, according to Scripture, reconciliation was effected by the removal of sin, so far as it was the cause of arming divine indignation against us. It is often said, that from the very nature of God as love, with friendly sentiments toward men, it becomes
us to think of reconciliation only on MAN’S side. That is by no means the case; for God’s procedure and mood of mind in a relative point of view have undergone a change in consequence of a great historical transaction, as is manifest from the fact that it is not simply said, “God has reconciled us,” but, “God has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 5:18). The two things there combined are, that the world was reconciled TO HIMSELF, and that this was effected by the historic FACT of the atonement; and reconciliation to Himself implies that anger and punitive justice were removed by the atonement. The same thing is expressed in the verse under consideration. The acting party is Christ, who is said to reconcile both unto God. And when it is added that this was accomplished, not by an absolute pardon, but in one body and by the cross, we have the same allusion to the great historic fact of the atonement, as the ground on which the reconciliation was effected.

b. In whom was the reconciliation brought about? In ONE BODY, that is, in Christ’s body. Some prefer to expound this expression of the church, but it is every way better to explain it of the Lord’s own body, because it is similar to the parallel passage in Colossians (Col. 1:22); and the allusion is plainly limited to the way of PROCURING reconciliation, not to the way of APPLYING it. The reconciliation was effected in one historic person, in one second man, the counterpart of the first man; and the church was reconciled in one for many, and therefore not by works of law or personal deeds which we have done. 102

c. By what was the reconciliation accomplished? BY THE CROSS,—a great fact in the world’s history, and the culminating point of Christ’s obedience unto death. The question raised is, Was the cross an objective fact for God as well as for us men? Did it reconcile the church to God, as it weighed with God, or merely as it moves the human heart? The phrase shows that reconciliation rests on Christ’s work, and consequently on a fact; and this objective fact was reconciling, not as it moved the human heart, or ushered in a new conduct on man’s part, but as it
introduced a new relation or standing in which men were placed before God.

d. By what method was the reconciliation accomplished? The answer is, HAVING SLAIN THE ENMITY IN HIS CROSS, or in HIMSELF; for the difference between the two modes of rendering the phrase is so small in point of meaning, that we may equally affirm, He slew the enmity in His cross, or, He slew the enmity in Himself as crucified. What enmity? Not the alienation between Jews and Gentiles, to which reference had been made in the previous verse, for it would be a mere tautology to repeat it here. Rather we must understand the expression as alluding to the mutual enmity between God and man extinguished by the cross.

As one passage personifying sin speaks of condemning it in Christ’s flesh (Rom. 8:3), so the enmity personified in the present passage is said to be slain; and the question is raised, How? During the days of His flesh, the Lord, by taking on Him the sins of His people, as the cause of disunion and enmity, suffered Himself to be treated as an object of divine wrath, though in reality His beloved Son. On the object of eternal love, the sin of man and the wrath of God came into collision as never had been seen since the world began. The Lord experienced both to the utmost, and by so doing annihilated the enmity for all whom He represented. Whether we look at the one body of the Lord, or at His activity, we see the sphere, the locality, the medium of reconciliation.

The substance of this testimony may be thus summed up. The Lord Jesus reconciled Jews and Gentiles to each other, not because He brought a good disposition to the disunited parties, but because He procured for both free access to God (ver. 18): He reconciled both to God by His cross. Did the atonement turn toward men the favor of God, or was it but a manifestation of an already existing relation of love? Scripture uniformly declares, that while the provision emanated from the love of the Father’s heart, the atonement was the great
historic fact by which the enmity between God and man was objectively removed, and men made the objects of favor. Then only was a friendly relation actually cemented.

III. Another passage is descriptive of the death of Christ as a sacrifice, and enables us to trace His priestly action in offering it: *Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet–smelling savor* (Eph. 5:2). In the context the apostle inculcates mutual forgiveness from the example of God (Eph. 4:32), and then mutual love from that illustrious instance of love which the Lord Jesus gave in His atoning death, represented as the offering of a sacrifice. Though the idea of sacrifice is nowhere fully exhibited except in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the expositor would do violence to the import of language were he to deny that we have here an allusion to a priestly offering. That Christ was a priest on earth, and offered an oblation before His ascension to His Father, appears from this easy analysis of the text:—Who offered? Christ. What did He offer? Not something external, not the blood of others, but Himself. For whom did He offer? For us. And in what manner was it accomplished? As an offering and sacrifice. From these questions, furnishing a simple analysis of the passage, we may warrantably collect that Christ offered Himself as the one true, ever–valid sacrifice to which the shadows of the former economy pointed. Nor is it necessary to supply any ellipsis in order to complete the sense; for the apostle’s words explicitly affirm, in the form here presented to us, that the sacrifice was not something apart from the personal Christ, not some action to be imitated, but Christ delivering Himself for us.

Which class of the sacrifices was before the apostle’s mind? Without doubt, the propitiatory sacrifices, and not the thank offerings. When we look at the two terms, it is thought by some that the first denotes an offering or sacrifice in general, and that the second, subjoined as elucidating the first, denotes a bloody sacrifice of a propitiatory character. Others roundly affirm, much in the same way
as did the Socinians of a former age, that the apostle had not the idea of an expiatory sacrifice before his mind. Partly from the terms descriptive of the sacrifice, partly because of the additional phrase, “for a sweet–savor,” they argue that the apostle refers to the free–will offerings; and the entire passage, thus interpreted, conveys nothing beyond the thought that Christ left us an example. But while he represents the riches of Christ’s love for our imitation, he had also before his mind the idea of an atoning sacrifice.

1. With regard to the terms here used, the first of the two, rendered OFFERING, may denote a free–will offering presented to God in token of gratitude and homage, but is also descriptive of propitiatory sacrifices, as will appear from a few passages. Thus, in the Epistle to the Hebrews the term is used in the phrase, “Where forgiveness of these is, there is no more offering for sin” (prosfora) (Heb. 10:18). In like manner, the writer avails himself of the same word when he represents the death of Christ as the ONE OFFERING which perfected for ever them that are sanctified (Heb. 10:14). There is no question, then, as to the application of the term to propitiatory sacrifices; and as to the second word, “an offering and SACRIFICE” (qusian) nothing warrants us to limit the idea underlying it to a freewill gift, as the apostle several times uses it for a propitiatory sacrifice. Passages in the Epistle to the Hebrews put this usage beyond all doubt; as, for example, “who needeth not daily, as those high priests, TO OFFER UP SACRIFICE first for his own sins, and then for the people’s” (Heb. 7:27). And many other passages might be adduced (Heb. 5:1, 8:3, 9:9, 23, 26, 10:5, 11, 26).

2. The additional phrase, “for a sweet–smelling savour,” has been adduced as an argument against the application of the terms to propitiatory sacrifices, because free–will offerings are often represented as a sweet–smelling savour to God; but we have only to examine the ritual, to be convinced that the expression was also applied to atoning sacrifices. It is the expression used in Genesis in connection with the burnt
offerings which Noah offered when he came out of the ark,—“The Lord smelled a sweet savour” (Gen. 8:21); and it is used of the burnt–offering on which the worshipper was to put his hand (Lev.1:4, 9). Nor was it limited to the burnt–offering though frequently mentioned in that connection in the sacrificial ritual (Lev.1:13, 17); for the expression is also employed in reference to the sin–offering, whether brought to expiate the offenses of the individual worshipper (Lev.1:31), or offered annually for the collective sins of the nation on the great day of atonement (Lev.16:25). In the last–mentioned text, the burning of the fat upon the altar was with a view to produce the sweet–smelling savour.

A further question is, whether the language refers to the burnt–offering or the sin–offering. It may without violence be referred to either: for the argument of Alting, Witsius, and Deyling, against the possibility of referring the passage to the sin–offering, on the ground that the sin–offering is never represented as a sacrifice of a sweet–smelling savour, rests on a mistake. Thus 105 Witsius maintains that only those sacrifices are said to be of a sweet–smelling savour to which the addition of oil and frankincense could be made (Lev.2:2–9), and that these additions could not be made to the sin–offering (Lev.5:11). That is not true in point of fact, as has already been proved from Leviticus (Lev.4:31, 16:25); and there is nothing in the allusion to a sacrifice of sweet–smelling savour that decides the question either way, as it is applied both to the burnt–offering and to the sin–offering. In that respect there was no difference. But the complexion of the language inclines us, if it is duly considered, to refer the terms rather to the burnt–offering than to the sin–offering; for when the New Testament writer more specifically refers to the sin–offering, the additional words, FOR SIN, are commonly subjoined (Rom. 8:3; Heb. 10:18, 26). The conclusion to which we are disposed to come is, that these terms, descriptive of the Lord’s sacrifice, do not so naturally express the specific idea of the sin–offering, inasmuch as that additional formula is neither appended nor indicated by the context.
The apostle seems to refer to the burnt-offering when he affirms that Christ loved us, and delivered Himself for us. This is confirmed by the fact that he emphatically alludes to the love of the Offerer, and to the oblation or sacrifice considered as an action done. Had the apostle been alluding to the sin-offering, the idea of sin would in some way have been prominent. Hence the words comprehend His entire earthly activity, as one uninterrupted continuous sacrifice from first to last, reaching its culmination in His cross. The typical burnt-offering figured forth the dedication of the entire man, with all His powers and faculties, or the perfect fulfilling of the Father’s will, and sanctifying of Himself for our sakes (John 17:19), only accomplished when He said, “It is finished.” The dedication of the Lord during His earthly career, till the obedience reached its climax on the cross, was adumbrated by the burnt-offering as a sacrifice of sweet-smelling savour. The type found its truth in the Lord’s holy life and obedience unto death; and therein He gave the New Testament accomplishment to the Old Testament shadow.

This fact, that the death of Christ, as an atoning sacrifice, was fragrant and well-pleasing to God, proves two things—that the cross was not only a PROPITIATION of divine wrath, but an ACCEPTABLE OBEDIENCE. Not only did it appease divine wrath, it also converted God’s relation into one of favor. It was merit as well as expiation. The passage is so expressed as to show that the Lord’s death was an infinitely acceptable deed; that sinlessness and sin-bearing were combined in His sacrifice in such way, that while punishment was expiated, the divine claims were all satisfied, and that sin did not in any sense attach to the personal human life of Jesus of Nazareth. The sacrifice was well-pleasing, because without blemish and defect. Personally perfect, but officially the object of the divine wrath by reason of sin-bearing, the Lord, by His vicarious life and death, offered a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour,—that is, acceptable to God in the utmost conceivable degree. The cross displays wrath appeased, death endured, punitive justice vindicated but does not stop there, according to the too common representation of the atonement even by its advocates. It
was also a law–magnifying obedience, the fulfillment of the condition under which man was originally placed, the purchase of life, the title to the inheritance; and the acceptableness of the Lord’s atoning sacrifice was typified by the fragrance or sweet–smelling savour of the old burnt–offering (Lev.16:17).

Some points may be established by this text against the long–repeated cavils and objections of the Socinianizing party. To these we shall advert.

1. This passage proves that Christ’s death was coincident with His sacrifice. When the opponents of the atonement alleged, as they were wont to do, that the death of Christ did not belong to His sacrifice, but preceded it, and that the sacrifice was His action in heaven, their representation did not satisfy the apostle’s testimony, which distinctly affirms that He offered Himself a sacrifice, and that He was a sacrifice when He delivered Himself. But if He was a true sacrifice on earth, He was also a true priest on earth, offering the oblation. We cannot transfer the sacrifice and priesthood to heaven, without flatly contradicting the apostle, or asserting that Christ’s earthly work was but fragmentary, and to be completed in heaven. Let them show that Christ twice offered Himself, and that it was but an imperfect sacrifice He offered on earth, or reconcile their position with the explicit declaration that He was once offered to bear the sins of many (Heb. 9:28).

2. There is no discrepancy between this statement and the doctrine of sacrifice contained in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Socinians, accustomed to maintain that the Epistle to the Hebrews describes only a sacrifice offered in heaven, after the death of the cross was accomplished, allowed that the same representation was not given by all the sacred writers. And the answer to this is, that the Spirit of truth is no spirit of contradiction, or of yea and nay.
3. The same parties, by a violence of construction, would evade the evidence of this passage by reading the words, OFFERING AND SACRIFICE FOR A SWEET–SMELLING SAVOUR, apart from the verb GAVE, or delivered. Rending it from the construction which belongs to it, they read it as an illustration, or commendation, or exclamation: thus, “What a sacrifice was that to God!” That is not to interpret language, but to twist it to the reader’s purpose and preconceived ideas. There is no warrant but in their own fancy for such a mode of punctuation. Of necessity, we must construe the verb GAVE with the word sacrifice: “who gave HIMSELF AN OFFERING and sacrifice.” The passage announces that He delivered Himself, and points out the way by which it was done—by sacrifice.

4. A fourth objection, emanating from the same parties, is to the effect that the word DELIVERED (paredwken eauton) is not the term commonly found in the Old Testament ritual to denote the presentation of the victim. But the reason is obvious: the animal victim was presented on the altar because it was passive, and did not spontaneously offer itself, whereas the Lord Jesus willingly offered Himself. And here it is important to remark, that the sacrifice, properly so called, was not the act of giving or delivering, but THE THING ITSELF DELIVERED: that was the acceptable sacrifice. This will be evident from a comparison of the passages which speak of money contributions, or of gifts, communicated as an acceptable sacrifice (Phil. 4:18; Heb. 13:16). In these instances, it was not the act of sending or communicating, but the thing sent or imparted, that constituted the sacrifice. And in the case before us, it was not the act of delivering, but Christ Himself delivered, that was the acceptable sacrifice.

In fine, this passage proves that the delivery of Christ as a sacrifice for us much more than compensated for the wrong done, and removed the wrath that had been armed against us: it won for us divine favor. The death of Jesus not only satisfied divine justice, but altered God’s attitude, or, as we would say in human relations,
His mood of mind, to those who previously had been objects of His just displeasure. The effect of Noah’s sacrifice, the words of which seem here to be recalled, was, that “God smelled a sweet savour, and said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more” (Gen. 8:21); and, in like manner, the sacrifice of Christ awakened favor in God’s heart, because it magnified the divine law in the most signal way. The purpose for which the apostle adduced this allusion to the atonement was, that we might cherish love like Christ. Not that the Ephesians could follow Christ in such a work as His, which was unique in its nature, and to be shared with none; but we are exhorted to cultivate love in general, after the example of our atoning Lord.

IV. Another passage, describing the church as the special object of the atonement, and the Lord’s death as containing in it the meritorious element of its own application, is as follows: husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word (Eph. 5:25–27). The apostle, while exhorting the Ephesians to the practice of conjugal duties, adduces the love of Christ in His relation to the church as the great example, and takes occasion, as the apostles usually do while enforcing moral duties by His example, to expatiate on His meritorious abasement and death. The testimony here given to the atonement may be noticed in a few obvious particulars.

1. The love which the apostle was led by His theme to delineate, is that of the great Bridegroom to the church. It is not a vague, indefinite affection, but special love; that is, a love to real persons, chosen from eternity, and redeemed in time, to be called and put among the children. He did not love the church purified, but for the sake of purifying it, and with an affection so intensely active, that His endeavours never cooled till He had redeemed His church, or bought her to be His; and the love which purchased the church at the most costly price (Acts 20:28), is as unchanging and inseparable as it is great (Rom. 8:35).
2. The love already mentioned is next described as prompting Him to deliver Himself for the church. Two parties are mentioned—Christ on the one hand, and the church on the other; and as death confronted us, the Lord became the substitute in such a sense that He delivered Himself, first into the hands of punitive justice at the bar of God, and then into the hands of men, by whom, according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, the sentence was carried into effect. The expression DELIVERED naturally recalls the Lord’s own saying, that He was delivered into the hands of men as an offering and a sacrifice to God. 107 This is the uniform meaning of the term, whether applied to the Father’s action in GIVING UP THE SON, or to the Son’s action in GIVING UP HIMSELF. And we have the historic fact in the Lord’s action in Gethsemane, as we have the doctrinal delineation of its significance here. His giving of Himself was, in point of fact, the sacrifice for the purchase of the church, His bride. He offered Himself for the church when He gave Himself spontaneously into the hand of God, permitting Himself to be seized and bound, tried and mocked, sentenced and buffeted, at the hand of those whom God appointed to execute His purpose. It was no vague, uncertain, and accidental transaction, but one according to special covenant and sponsion for the good of that elect company, the church of redeemed men, who were given Him by name and bought with a price. It was a transaction so definite, that it procured the redemption of the church, and carried with it the meritorious element of its own imputation and application. He could not lose one for whom He died: the holy rectitude of the divine moral government absolutely forbade that. His death was the spontaneous surrender of Himself, when He could have warded off all His against His life; for He had power to lay it down, and power to take it up again. And what did He give as the sacrifice? Not an external thing, not something nor all things possessed by Him, but HIMSELF, HIS INFINITELY PRECIOUS PERSON. And for whom? For His church, that it might be His blood–bought property, and so belong to the great Bridegroom.
3. The end contemplated by the Lord’s death was, THAT HE MIGHT SANCTIFY the church. This is plainly proved by the particle of design which introduces the clause (ina). As to sanctification here, we must determine whether it means dedication to God on the ground of atonement, or inward progressive purity. The former view must be accepted wherever holiness is immediately connected with the death of Christ. The passage has in it a conjugal reference; and the primary meaning is, that the church was set apart, or consecrated, to Him as His bride,—the uniform meaning of the term when connected with the atonement. This is the use of the word whenever mention is made of the Levitical worship and of sacrifices, which sanctified to the purifying of the flesh (Heb. 9:13). We are admitted into fellowship with God by means of Christ’s atonement. Whether sufficient ground exists for Michaelis’ remark, that the high priest in Israel was called the bridegroom of his people, is doubtful (Lev.21:4). If well founded, we should fully understand why the sacred writers so frequently employ this figure.

Two terms are here used, so nearly synonymous, that it is difficult to define the precise shade of difference between them, when they describe the effect of Christ’s atoning blood. I refer to the two verbs SANCTIFY and CLEANSE, common to all the apostles. It may be proper first to define the relation between the two clauses, considered separately, according to the translation which we gave above: “That He might sanctify it, cleansing it with the washing of water by the word.” We regard the participle (kaqarisa) as expressing simultaneous action; for this is necessary to the sense, and there is no necessity for translating the participle as intimating previous action, introductory to the action of the verb. They coincide in time, and the participial clause conveys an explanation of a peculiar nature, which it is possible, we think, to apprehend. The first clause seems more especially to denote the objective standing of the worshipper, and his near approach to a holy God by the blood of atonement; whereas the participial clause seems to refer to the subjective consciousness or felt experience of the same privilege (Heb. 9:14); or, as Winer puts it, the CLEANSING may denote
something negative, and the word SANCTIFY something positive.

To understand this language, we must carry with us the import of the Jewish worship. The terms on which we are commenting refer to the removal of defilements, which excluded the worshipper from coming into the presence of a holy God, and prevented him from intercourse with his fellow–citizens. When the uncleanness was removed by sacrificial blood, or in the use of sprinkling according to the law, the excluded person was restored to the enjoyment of all the privileges secured to the people of God. In a word, he was HOLY, or SANCTIFIED. With regard to the CLEANSING added in the participial clause, it is so allied to the former, that the one may be said to include the other; and the thought will be, that by means of the CLEANSING, WASHING, or SPRINKLING of Christ’s blood—for all these expressions, borrowed from the sacrificial ritual, are employed with little if any difference of meaning—sinners, previously excluded from access to a holy God by sin, are restored to fellowship, and consciously nigh (Eph. 2:13). When it is said that Christ gave Himself for the church, that He might sanctify it, the meaning is, that He gave Himself to deliver us from estrangement, the consequence of sin, and to reinstate us men, once far off by sin, in the favor, friendship, and fellowship of a holy God.

4. The passage furthermore brings out the SPECIAL LOVE OF THE REDEEMER, and the efficacy of His atoning blood. His redeeming love was specially directed to the church as its proper object; for the language is so definite and precise as to leave no doubt that His love finds out all those to whom it is exercised. 110 Nor can the efficacious character of His redemption–work be called in question, if we do justice to the terms of the present passage, and others similar; for either we must assert that the atonement was efficacious to all for whom it was destined, or concede that Christ has been largely disappointed of His design. The two clauses of these verses, connected together by a final particle (ina) exhibit the scope or design from which the Savior
acted in His whole redemption work. The first of the verses (ver. 25) is so connected with the following, that they declare the end for which He acted, and the means of attaining it; and no one with reverent conceptions of the Father’s commission or the Son’s finished work, will admit that He failed of His purpose. It was an atonement that satisfied all the claims of God. And whether we look at the divine appointment, or at the intrinsic merit of the redemption, the work was of such a kind as to carry with it the ground of its own imputation and application. He will not lose one for whom He died; for He gave Himself for the church, a surety fulfilling every condition.

Section 8.—The Epistle to the Philippians.

This epistle was written on the occasion of receiving a money contribution sent to the apostle, then a prisoner in Rome. The Philippians had formerly sent once and again to his necessity, and after an interval their care of him flourished again (Phil. 4:10, 15). To relieve their anxiety about himself, he enters into details as to his history, taking occasion to WARN them against the Judaizing party, which sought access to all the new planted churches, and exhorting them to mutual concord, joy in the Lord, and preparation for the Lord’s coming. The scope of the epistle is rather practical than doctrinal. Hence the atonement is less referred to than in many other epistles. There are some less direct allusions, as when the apostle designates certain men enemies of the cross of Christ (Phil. 3:18). This shows the place which the atonement occupies; for the Judaizers were dangerous, because they subverted salvation by the cross. The apostle, now very near his crown, says, too, that he counted all things but loss to win Christ, and to be found in Him, not having his own righteousness (Phil. 3:8); proving that to the last he clung, as at the beginning, to the atonement or righteousness of God.
The only text in this epistle to which we shall direct special attention is the following:— *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

*Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name* (Phil. 2:5–9). The apostle, exhorting the Philippians to mutual concord, and bidding them esteem others better than themselves, passes over, in the most natural way, to Christ’s example as displayed in His entire humiliation on earth. Is it true, as some allege, that Paul gives no outline of redemption here, but limits himself to the history of Christ as it furnishes an example? That is not admissible here, nor in other parallel passages which bring out Christ’s abasement. The atonement is often put in the bosom of what is properly an ethical context (Eph. 5:2, 5:25; 1 Pet. 3:18). Besides, the connection between the humiliation and exaltation of Christ indubitably points to the atonement and its reward (ver. 9).

1. The first thing to be determined is, whether the mention of Christ existing in the form of God refers to His divine preexistence—to a state anterior to the incarnation? This must be affirmed if we interpret by the force of terms; and this was the general interpretation among the Fathers and the divines of the Reformed Church. 111
Though many Lutheran expositors, after Luther’s example, labored with all ingenuity to refer the terms to the incarnate Christ,—sometimes appealing to the name “Christ Jesus,” occurring immediately before, sometimes asserting that the ethical precept of humility which is enforced did not require any allusion to the preincarnate state,—the comment cannot be made even plausible. The apostle obviously describes Christ in His divine glory, and then in the state of abasement. The expression, BEING or EXISTING (uparcwn) IN THE FORM OF GOD, can be expounded only of divine existence with the manifestation of divine glory. There is no need for debating whether THE FORM OF GOD is an expression denoting essence or nature; for the whole phrase taken together, WHO BEING or EXISTING IN THE FORM OF GOD, leaves no room for doubt that we must here unite the attributes and their manifestation. We cannot reduce the expression to the mere accidents of the divine; for there is a reference to subsistence, and a thing does not exist in its accidents. We may fitly alternate this phrase, therefore, with another, which fully covers it: “who, being the brightness of His glory, and express image of His person,” (Heb. 1:3).

Another clause, equally significant, as exhibiting the consciousness or sentiments of the only begotten Son in those relations which subsisted between Him and the Father, is subjoined: WHO THOUGHT IT NOT ROBBERY TO BE EQUAL WITH GOD. This announces what the Lord frequently declared in His own words, that, without arrogating what was not His own by divine right, He was conscious of entire equality with God, and that He thought this sentiment no transgression of His limits, nor invasion of another’s rights. As to the mode of rendering adopted by many expositors in the last age, “who did not regard His equality with God as an object of solicitous desire,” or “who did not esteem it an object to be caught at to be on a parity with God,” it has ceased to have much interest, for it is a conjectural meaning put upon the term ROBBERY. It is contrary to the etymology of the word, which denotes the act of seizing; and it loses the emphasis of the clause, which, as descriptive of conscious equality with God, was meant to show spontaneous abasement in the light of that divine
relation of which He was fully aware. The former clause is an objective delineation of the divine dignity of the Son of God, while this clause is a subjective delineation of the same thing.

2. A second question to be determined is, Are we to assume two different gradations of humiliation,—one indicated by the words, He EMPTIED HIMSELF (ver. 7), as we rendered them; and another indicated by the terms, HE HUMBLED HIMSELF (ver. 8): that is, Have we two parts of the abasement of Jesus,—one more particularly referring to the incarnation, the other more expressly alluding to the sufferings which led Him to the cross? That mode of exposition, adopted by many, conveys the idea of a first and second HUMILIATION: the first consisting in the abasement which led Him to become man; the second consisting in subjecting Himself to the death of the cross. We should thus have two gradations of humiliation delineated objectively; and the two VERBS HE EMPTIED HIMSELF, and HE HUMBLED HIMSELF, taken with the participial clauses which severally belong to them, the hinges of these two gradations. I have never been satisfied that this has been made good by any ingenuity of arrangement that has ever been applied to the passage. Another view is to apply to the historic life of Christ the same distinction which could be applied to His pre–historic life in the previous clauses. We should, on this principle, take the one as an objective delineation of the condition into which His condescending love brought Him down (ver. 7); and the other as descriptive of the conscious aim or subjective feeling with which He entered into that sphere (ver. 8). This latter view, we think, has much to recommend it on the ground of simplicity. The passage, thus viewed, has a remarkable resemblance to the parallel passage, in which Christ is represented as a son, yet learning obedience by the things He suffered (Heb. 5:8, 9). This interpretation fits in, too, most aptly to that lowliness of mind, for the enforcement of which the Lord’s example was adduced. 114 We shall so expound it.

a. The objective condition of abasement, then, is thus expressed: “But He emptied Himself, taking the form of
a servant, being made in the likeness of men.” Of what did He empty Himself? He was emptied by becoming another, not by ceasing to be what He was; that is, He became man, whereas He was God; a servant, though He was a Lord; of rich, poor; of glorious, abased; of omnipotent, weak; of omnipresent, limited; not by ceasing to be what He was, but by becoming what He was not. As to the expressions which follow in the participial clauses, they are highly significant, whether we take them as co–ordinate or subordinate.

The first clause., which says that He took the form of a servant, sets forth spontaneous abasement as contrasted with the sin of Adam. Humiliation came in to expiate usurpation. If the first man aspired to be as God, the second man, who by inherent right was above all service, descended to a servant’s position that He might expiate their sin who sought to be more than was appointed for them. 115 The expression “taking the form of a servant,” is not synonymous with human nature simply, but takes in the further idea of an abased condition. The second participial clause, in which it is said that He was made in the likeness of men, lends no countenance to anything bordering on Docetic theories, as if He were a phantom form. On the contrary, the clause affirms that, while He is neither a mere man nor a sinful man, He was very man, with a true humanity in all respects like our own; nay, made in the likeness of men in the most abased form—the consequence of that sin–bearing and curse–bearing career through which He passed from His birth (see Rom. 8:3 ). When it is added that He was found in fashion as a man—a clause subjoined partly to resume the two previous clauses, partly to prepare for the outline of obedience given in the following statement—the meaning is, that externally, in discourse and action, in behaviour and mode of life, He was found in fashion as a man.

b. The obedience of Jesus—that is, His subjective disposition in the given sphere already mentioned—is thus described: “He humbled Himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross.” The meaning seems to be, that in
this condition He subjected Himself to the service which the sphere imposed upon Him; that He neither assumed any of the glory that properly belonged to Him, nor disdained to move in the restraints, reproach, and pain which were its necessary accompaniments; and that He Himself, as the meek and lowly One, to His position. The same expression is applied by Luke to denote inward sentiment or disposition: “He that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (Luke 14:11). He filled up with humility and obedience His allotted sphere, that is, the position of a servant, with all its obligations, as He had spontaneously assumed it (Matt. 20:28). The obedience mentioned in this clause has express relation to the form of a servant mentioned in the previous verse. They are counterparts; the one the outward condition, the other the animating spirit corresponding to it. The form of a servant may be distinguished from the obedience of the servant, but they cannot be separated; as the outward and the inward,—the sphere, and the spirit pervading it.

3. We next notice the features of the obedience; and the first question is, To whom was the obedience rendered? Not to the Romans or Jews, as some have put it, but primarily to God, sustaining the character of Lawgiver and Judge. But the capacity in which He obeyed comes out in connection with His person. When this divine person TOOK the form of a servant, the language signifies that He took it into the unity of His person; and consequently, as the creator and preserver of His own humanity, He could not but be its master. This decides on the nature of His obedience. It was not personally necessary from any obligations devolving upon Him, but solely undertaken for others, and meant to be laid to their account, according to the covenant by which He acted as the Lord’s servant (Isa. 13:1). He disdained not to stoop to the curse as our sin-bearing surety, sinlessly obedient at every step (Matt. 20:28).

Of this obedience the first prerequisite was, that it should be voluntary; and this is the point affirmed. A double act was necessary in this transaction: one on God’s side, who, as the world’s ruler, and as the party to be
reconciled, appointed the sacrifice; for without His authority the whole atoning work of Christ would have been without a basis: the other on the side of Christ, whose vicarious obedience could be rendered only by free choice. The very notion of involuntary suffering, or inevitable suffering, in a world where all was disordered, had no application to Him; for no one could take His life from Him, or inflict suffering without His consent.

But His abasement is first described as OBEDIENCE, then as obedience ONTO DEATH, and then as the death or THE CROSS. The obedience was one from His birth to His death, though consisting of two several parts or elements; in other words, an active and passive obedience, as it is commonly called, or an obedience previous to His sufferings, and during them. No one will exclude the suffering part of the obedience who ponders the words UNTO DEATH, that is, as far as death inclusive; and no one will exclude the active obedience, or that of His life, if he does justice to this expression, which describes obedience extending to the borders of death, and running through it. Christ is represented as complying with the will of a superior, as descending to death natural and eternal, and as undergoing the ignominious cross, an emblem of the curse, that we might go free (Gal. 3:13). The apostle comprehends the whole obedience of life and death: for he does not say that He was obedient in death, as if nothing more were imposed upon Him than to die. He united the obedience of life and death as equally vicarious.

4. Next follows the reward expressed in the words, “Wherefore God hath highly exalted Him” (ver. 9). The particle WHEREFORE is not a consecutive particle, but causal, defining the relation of causality; and here it is the relation between work and reward. It was at one time made a theological question: Did Christ win a reward for Himself by His obedience, or was He wholly born for us when He was sent on His divine commission and died for us? Calvin took up the notion, that Christ merited nothing for Himself; but it has always been felt that WE
cannot do justice to this text unless we maintain that by His atoning sacrifice Christ merited the fulfillment of the conditional promise of the law: “Do this, and thou shalt live.” 119 We must hold that He merited the reward for His people, and therefore for Himself as the surety–head of His people; and He received a name above every name, which seems to be, as Zanchius puts it, that of Son of God, though he was Son from eternity 120( Heb. 1:5 ). And adoration must be paid to Him by all intelligences in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth ( ver. 10 ).

Section 9.—The Epistle to the Colossians.

This epistle puts the atonement in a peculiar light. It contains what the other epistles set forth as to the direct connection of the death of Christ with forgiveness, redemption, and reconciliation; but it introduces a new thought—the bearing of the atonement on other orders of being. The occasion of it explains this peculiarity. This epistle, written during Paul’s imprisonment, about the same time with the Epistle to the Ephesians, had as its chief design to bring out the positive doctrine of Christ’s person. Therefore it is a Christological epistle in its main contents. Various allusions are made to an erratic philosophy threatening to spoil the Colossians in many ways, to a worshipping of angels, an intruding into the unseen world, and an asceticism according to the commandments of men ( Col. 2:18 ); plain marks of an incipient Gnosticism, with its theory of emanations. The
doctrine of angels, or of a spiritworld, was opposed to the sole mediation of Christ, and introduced an intermediate order of beings between God and man. Paul puts the relation of angels to Christ in its true light, showing how they stood to the Son of God both in creation and redemption; and that the work of creation was effected by the same person who was the cause of redemption (Col. 1:15, 16). As the firstborn of every creature, or, more strictly, the first–begotten before every creature, all things are said to have been created IN Him, BY Him, and TO Him; the allusion being to the fact that the world owed its origin to Him, and was constituted IN HIM. The apostle, in short, reverts to the origin of all things, and their standing in the Son, and then directs attention to a new point—the union under one common Head of redeemed men and elect angels (1:20). By proving that Christ is the one uniting bond of both, he supplanted the Gnostic theories; for there was no place for dependence on a spirit–world or other mediators. We shall omit passages the same in terms with texts in the Epistle to the Ephesians (Col. 1:14, 3:13), but must consider two passages which, while displaying the effect of the atonement on men, also set forth its effect on other orders of being.

I. The first is as follows: *It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell: and, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and unblameable and unreproveable in His sight* (Col. 1:19–22). The apostle opens up a view of the atonement as embracing angelic intelligences as well as men. In the Epistle to the Ephesians the atonement was exhibited as uniting Jews and Gentiles in one family. Here its EFFECT is seen in bringing together into one family and under one Head the entire universe of spiritual BEINGS in earth and heaven.

To obviate the difficulty that suggests itself on this point, it may be proper to
make one or two preliminary remarks. Besides the union which the creatures celestial and terrestrial enjoyed with their Creator in their normal state, they had a relation to each other as fellow–citizens in one vast city of God, however different in federal constitution, capacity, or service. Man’s sin dissolved this union in both respects, separating US from God, and from those who once were fellow–citizens, but who, like loyal subjects at the outbreak of a rebellion, could henceforth have no relations with the rebels. The unfallen angels took part with God, and respected the sovereign rights of God. When man’s relation to God was broken, his relation to the heavenly hosts was also terminated; and he had as little access to their society as to that of their God, to whom they remained loyal. God’s will was no longer done in earth as it was in heaven, and the union of men and angels under one Monarch was at an end.

This must be taken into account, when we think of the atonement as restoring the relations of the fellow–citizens, because restoring the throne–rights of God. So wide was the effect of the propitiation, that all intelligences and relations in the empire of God felt its manifold fruits. The abasement of such a person—the Creator and bond of the universe, according to the divine idea—was so meritorious, that it not only brought back a peaceful union to this world, but restored the universe to friendly relations, by bringing all into a new relation to God in Christ. It may be difficult to set forth the relation of the atonement to the angelic world And hence many, swayed by the unduly pressed parallelism of the Epistle to the Ephesians, explain these words either of the union of the Jewish church with the Gentile, or of departed saints in heaven and redeemed men on earth,—but without any colour or warrant. The best interpreters, the Greek Fathers, Calvin, Bengel, and all in every age who have cast the most penetrating glance into Scripture, expound the passage of the reconciliation of rational intelligences in earth and heaven. 121 And notwithstanding the dogmatic difficulty suggested to every mind by the fact that angelic beings were never at enmity with God, this is the correct view.
In one sense, the efficacy of the atonement reaches to them, but in a different way from the reconciliation of those alienated by sin. God reconciles all things to Himself, celestial and terrestrial, and the angels seem to have been confirmed by the Son of God. It is not to be affirmed that Christ was the Mediator of angels, for the language of Scripture is, that He is the Mediator between God and men (1 Tim. 2:5); but He is their Head, the uniting bond of the universe, gathered up anew or recapitulated under Him (Eph. 1:10). In the remarks of Calvin on this text, two reasons are assigned why angels must be reconciled to God: first, that they were creatures never beyond the hazard of falling till confirmed by Christ; next, that their obedience had not such perfection or righteousness as might suffice to a full union with God, and therefore needed a reconciler. Whether we take in the second element or not—for some may think it tantamount to affirming that Christ was the Mediator of angels—certainly the work of Christ had an influence felt through all heaven. The reconciliation of sinful men stands on the foreground; but it must be added, that the rent caused by sin was repaired, and the heavenly hosts united with redeemed men under a new Head and by a new bond, in virtue of that atoning work which called forth wonder, praise, and joy among thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, referred to in the previous context (ver. 16). But let us look more particularly at the terms.

1. The reconciliation is of God’s good pleasure (ver. 19); that is, is traced up to God’s appointment. Though the nominative to the verb PLEASED is not expressed in the original, we can supply no other than the term God or Father, as is given in the authorized English version; for in the New Testament it is uniformly said, that it pleased the Father to send the Son. The Father formed the purpose of reconciling us, and wished to be reconciled. Hence He prepared what was necessary, and provided for its execution; the ultimate reason being, that God was so pleased. As to the import of reconciliation, we have had occasion to notice again and again that it intimates a restoration of friendship, the appeasing of divine anger, and a new relation of favor. Hostility lay on God’s side as well as man’s side, whose rebellion provoked it; it was a mutual estrangement; and
reconciliation is in like manner a change in the divine relation and mood of mind toward us, as well as a change on our side toward God.

2. Reconciliation was not absolute, nor without mediation. It was by a historic fact in the moral government of God. Hence it is said: “HAVING MADE PEACE THROUGH THE BLOOD OF HIS CROSS.” As to the relation of these clauses, we must fix attention on the fact, that the scheme of salvation, whether we take account of the incarnation (ver. 19) or of the atonement (ver. 20), emanated from the divine good pleasure as the supreme source of all. Next, reconciliation intimates the removal of all existing estrangement between God and the world, taken in its widest sense. For we must take the term “reconcile” here, not in a new sense, but with a wider extension of meaning, viz. TO UNITE BY RECONCILING. 123 That underlying thought cannot be denied; for the atonement refers only to men in the proper acceptation of the term. But the application of the word in this connection is appropriate only when we take in the further idea of uniting the universe to God, and restoring the disturbed harmony. The making of peace referred to in the participial clause is specially noteworthy. The past tense in both clauses in the original shows that reconciliation and peacemaking were contemporaneous,—that they covered each other, and were accomplished once for all. (See Winer, Gr. § 45, d.)

The apostle next subjoins the material cause or means by which this peacemaking was effected: “by the blood of His cross.” This was added to show that such a relation was not formed without a satisfaction for sins, though it is not more particularly mentioned how the Lord’s death produced that effect. This is obvious from the tenor of Scripture, and from the two terms here used, “BLOOD OF THE CROSS:” the first suggesting a comparison between the Lord’s death and the blood of sacrifice, familiar to all acquainted with the Old Testament worship; the second recalling the penal character of the death, as that of a curse–bearing
substitute. Paul laid such stress on these aspects of Christ’s death—for he repeats the same, or a still more definite allusion, in the two following verses—because the Colossian errorists, in their speculative teaching, appear to have turned men’s minds away from the Lord’s curse-bearing humiliation to a mystic contemplation, and a spirit-world of angelic mediators.

3. A transition is next made to the case of the Colossians, formerly alienated, but now reconciled (Col. 1:20, 21). It is not necessary to repeat the explanation already given of the word RECONCILE. Beyond all question, it is used to intimate that men, once at enmity, are now restored to friendly relations. As this is the meaning in the reference to the Colossians, we may affirm that the word has the same signification in both verses, coupled by the particle and (vers.20, 21). But we have specially to notice the means by which it was effected: “in the BODY Of His FLESH through DEATH;” a remarkable combination of terms, announcing with singular brevity as many constituent elements in the atonement. First, the atonement was a great historic fact, or objective reality, accomplished in Christ’s person once for all during His earthly sojourn; and the circumstance now mentioned is clearly marked, that no one might conclude it was effected apart from the person of the incarnate Son, described in the previous context, or that it stood in any way connected with what He did after His return to glory. Again, this pregnant passage alludes to His true corporeity,—an allusion directed against those Gnostic theories in Colosse, which breathed a false spiritualism, and looked unfavorably on matter in every form, and therefore on the true corporeity of the incarnate Son. Thirdly, the apostle mentions the body of His FLESH, which, as already mentioned, denotes, wherever it occurs in reference to Jesus, that He carried about on earth a sin-bearing humanity, and therefore a weak, abased, and suffering humanity (see Rom. 8:3). Last of all, the apostle, to complete the outline of the Lord’s atoning sacrifice, mentioned death the wages of sin. When we put together all these elements, the apostle’s testimony here amounts to this, that the atonement was consummated historically and once for all in the person of
the incarnate, abased, and dying Surety; and it takes in His life, wound up by His death (vers. 20, 22).

4. The fruit or effect of the reconciliation is next added: “to present you holy, and unblameable, and unreproveable in His sight”. The importance of this declaration appears on two grounds. We are taught, in the first place, that sanctification does not precede reconciliation, or lay the foundation of reconciliation, but follows it. They who put sanctification first confound everything, and mistake the relations of things as well as the entire aim and scope of Christianity: they can never ward off an all-desolating legalism.

But while the reconciliation is first in order, a second thought of vast importance is, that the atonement gives rise to sanctification at the next remove, and stands in causal connection with it. This passage, and others similar, prove that the atonement was the purchase not only of the rectified relation in which we stand before God, but of that consecration by which we are set apart for God, and also the inner life and renovation by which we are presented faultless before Him. Such a passage as this proves that we must connect the communications of divine life with the atonement as the purchase of all. If, in an externalizing way, the atonement is dissociated from life and sanctification, or, on the other hand, if we regard the divine life as first in order, and independent of the blood of the cross, all things are dislocated. Reconciliation is first in order, but the holy and blameless life follows by necessary consequence.

Attempts have been made to make all these predicates, HOLY, UNBLAMEABLE, UNREPROVEABLE, have reference not to outwardly perceptible advances in the divine life, but to the relative standing of the Colossians before God; as the people of Israel, after the offered sacrifice on the day of atonement, were immediately regarded by God as holy. The words, IN His SIGHT, or before Him, may, it is alleged, describe an immediate relation to God by the death of Christ. That would have been by no means an
unwarrantable interpretation, had the epithet HOLY stood alone; and we may attach that sense to this epithet. But the other epithets refer to the inner sanctification of the spirit. The whole clause, indeed, bears so close a resemblance to a parallel one in Ephesians (Eph. 5:27), which mentions the presentation of a glorious church, that it seems natural to refer both to what is future.

II. Another text in this epistle, of a very comprehensive character, puts forgiveness, the blotting out of the handwriting that was against us, and victory over Satan, in connection with the atonement: And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them, openly, triumphing over them in it (Col. 2:13–15). The apostle, in the previous context, spoke of Christ as having all the fullness of the Godhead (ver. 9), as the Head of all principality and power, and as the channel of spiritual life,—views fitted to exclude every rival, and to turn away attention from lower intelligences. Another point demands notice: the apostle first speaks to the Colossians as YOU (ver. 13), and then adopts a style common to him and them, when he says us (ver. 14). Some, commenting on the passage, conceive a transition from the Gentile section to the Jewish Christian section of the church; and in conformity with this, explain the allusion to the handwriting of ordinances as a something that properly applied to them. But for this there is no warrant: no trace of such a design can be discovered. Nor is it in keeping with the apostle’s manner when taking in others with himself; for in such cases the pronoun WE, occurring in the apostolic style, expresses the Christian sentiment common to him with others, irrespective of nationality. The following points demand attention in the structure of this passage, and in the arrangement of these successive participial clauses, which bring out what, in point of order, is previous to the
quickening to spiritual life:—

1. The acting party, or the nominative in the grammatical structure of the sentence, is God, described as quickening, and on the ground of forgiveness (ver. 13). Spiritual life is connected with forgiveness, and presupposes forgiveness: the sins of men must be forgiven before life could properly enter. Forgiveness precedes, and premial life takes for granted that obstacles have been removed. Nay, applying the same principle to the Surety, the Lord could not have been quickened till we, for whom He died, were virtually and potentially discharged (see Rom. 4:25).

2. Another clause shows that forgiveness presupposes the objective fact of blotting out the handwriting of ordinances, and nailing it to the cross (ver. 14). Opinions as to the import of this handwriting are various.

a. Thus, in the first place, some refer the expression simply to conscience, as containing an indictment against us; the opinion of Luther and Melancthon, and repeated by many with the addition of a more objective element—guilt. According to this comment, the indictment, or, which is the same thing, guilt, was deleted like a bond, and nailed to the cross, when God suspended His Son on the accursed tree. In other words, Christ was so identified with the handwriting, that He was considered as the personal guilt, and His crucifixion as the means of its extinction. The cross annulled the bond or handwriting that was against us. From this and other passages (Gal. 3:13; 1 Pet. 2:24) it appears that He took guilt on Himself, and subjected Himself to that to which the handwriting bound us; that is, He did not subject Himself to what was nominal, and procured a nominal discharge, but offered a full equivalent. This plainly is the substance of the phrase.

b. Others more particularly refer the whole to the Mosaic law; and here again
interpreters go into two divisions. One class refers the phrase to the ceremonial law, arguing that the ritual observances were symbols
of deserved punishment, or a confession of guilt. There might be some reason for this limitation if there was any ground—which there is not—for the supposition that the apostle here distinguished between Jews and Gentiles. But since the apostles, in their use of the pronoun WE or us in the course of their epistles, only express the Christian WE is better to understand the term HANDWRITING of the Mosaic law generally, 128 that is, of the law as a complete whole, consisting of moral and ceremonial elements. The cross was meant to be the blotting out of the indictment; and the law, in one important aspect of it, because it was never fulfilled, was but the creditor’s bond, the indictment, the charge which was presented against those who were bound to it, but who failed at every point.

How was the handwriting nailed to the cross when the Lord’s body, and not the law, was nailed to the cross? Christ’s body was no bond; but as He was made sin, or bore our sins on His own body to the tree, all was embodied in Him. 129 The handwriting, the curse, the sin of His people, are identified with Him; and the language of exchange can be competently applied to Him in the performance of that great work of procuring our discharge. And why was the bond nailed to the cross? The only answer that can be given is, that it might be nullified. Any other interpretation is inadmissible, because out of keeping with Paul’s design. The meaning of the clause, then, may be easily collected: it is simply this, that sin could be forgiven only on the one condition that its guilt was expiated, and that not by the sinner, but by a surety in his stead. Hence we elsewhere read, that God condemned sin in Christ’s flesh ( Rom. 8:3 ). The key to these deep thoughts is to be found in the fact that Christ exchanged places with us; and as the obligations are now discharged, the demands of the law are no longer capable of being presented to us, because they were discharged by the Surety, who nailed them to His cross, and is now far beyond their reach. The sins of Christ’s people were annihilated, extinguished, and blotted out, as if they had never been. In short, they are no longer on the Christian, because borne by Christ to the tree; and no longer on Him, because they have been so completely expiated, that the deleted bond may be seen on His crucified humanity as nailed to His cross.
3. A third clause, grounded at least in thought by what precedes, states that the cross was the victory which God celebrated over principalities and powers of darkness (ver. 15). The acting party in this clause, as in the others already noticed, is God; and the thought is, that by the atonement of the cross God stripped satanic principalities of their dominion, or disarmed them, as a victor does in the hour of victory. And as the verb in the original conveys the idea of doing an action for Himself, there is a perceptible allusion to His glory, and to the interests of His kingdom. They who refer the language to Jewish authorities are wide of the mark. Three terms are here used—SPOILING, SHOWING OPENLY, TRIUMPHING; all significant, but describing effects contemporaneous with His crucifixion. We do not interpret the clauses as delineating a triumph over the powers of darkness during Christ’s separate or disembodied state, for that comment is excluded by the fact that the agent referred to in this verse is God, as in the previous clauses. Neither are we to suppose a leading of them in triumph through space after His resurrection; for the terms limit the allusion to the expiation effected on the cross. But it may be asked, How did the cross effect the results recounted in the three several clauses? I answer: Sin was the ground of Satan’s dominion, the sphere of his power, and the secret of his strength; and no sooner was the guilt lying on us extinguished, than his throne was undermined, as Jesus Himself said (John 12:31). When the guilt of sin was abolished, Satan’s dominion over God’s people was ended; for the ground of his authority was the law which had been violated, and the guilt which had been incurred. This points the way to the right interpretation; for all the mistakes have arisen from not perceiving with sufficient clearness how the triumph could be celebrated on His cross. When we reflect that the power of Satan was based on sin and guilt, and that but for sin justice would not have surrendered mankind into his power, we perceive that the annihilation of man’s guilt annihilated the sway of these powers of darkness over all the elect. Though confident that the shameful death of crucifixion would undermine Christ’s influence, they found, in the first
place, that it overthrew their own; for the cross *spoiled* or disarmed the satanic powers by destroying sin. Moreover, it put them to shame, by making a snow *OF THEM OPENLY* before the universe; for though the men at the cross did not understand the bearings of that stupendous fact, holy angels present at His death, as they had been present at His birth, took in its vast dimensions. Still further, the cross was a scene of TRIUMPH on the part of God, because Satan’s empire received a defeat from which there was no recovery: it was on God’s part at once a victory and a display of all God’s attributes, to the irretrievable ruin, dismay, and confusion of satanic powers.

**Section 10.—The Epistles to the Thessalonians.**

These two epistles, the first of the Pauline epistles in order of time, were addressed to a church distinguished for brotherly love and the eager expectation of the Lord’s coming. Cradled in persecution, which first caused the apostle abruptly to depart from their city (*Acts 17:1–10*), and then made several of their number martyrs (*1 Thess. 2:14*, *4:13*), they cherished an eager anticipation of the second advent. In consequence of supposing it immediately at hand, some of them, however, neglected the duties of their worldly calling,—a perversion which required a corrective at the hand of Paul. But as a congregation they stood firm in the truth, and did not, like some others, need anew to receive doctrinal directions as to the sole ground of acceptance. Twice in these epistles Paul directly mentions the death of Christ; and in four passages we discern a distinct allusion to the
I. Deliverance from the wrath of God is described as secured by the atonement in two several passages, which we shall notice one after the other.

a. The first of these is thus expressed: *Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come* (1 Thess. 1:9, 10). Paul, distinguishing the Christians from the Gentiles, and also from the Jews, names these two features as descriptive of true believers: their serving the living and true God, and their waiting for God's Son from heaven. Deliverance from wrath, expressed in the present tense, because a present as well as a future possession, is directly ascribed to Jesus, who is also called the Son of God. The death of Jesus is not expressly named, but there is no reason to doubt that this thought underlies the statement. For, in the first place, the clause "whom He raised from the dead," implies both suretyship and the acceptance of His finished work; and, in the second place, the actual deliverance is here mentioned as a present and constant privilege, in terms which obviously imply that it was won or procured for us by His earthly abasement and sacrifice.

b. A second text, not less express on the same theme, is as follows: *For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us* (1 Thess. 5:9). The words "who died for us" are linked to the other expression, "by our Lord Jesus Christ," according to a well known
rule of Greek grammar, that serves to lay emphasis on the idea connected by an already well–known relation (quippe qui). The meaning intended to be conveyed is, that the deliverance was based on the ground of Christ’s vicarious death, and that on this account alone men are not appointed to wrath, their deserved doom, but to obtain salvation. The double privilege is connected with the Lord’s death as the meritorious cause. Language demands that interpretation, and will bear no other (comp. Rom. 5:9).

The question of divine wrath is at present the great point in debate on the subject of the atonement. It is undermined in a great variety of views, and it seems proper, nay, necessary, to dwell on it somewhat more at large. itfragen.

A few inquiries may here be raised and answered, that we may arrive at satisfactory conclusions as to this point—on which, in fact, the two schools of theology in our day are divided—whether Christ may competently be described as bearing the wrath of God.

1. Does a wrath of God exist, and in what does it consist? That there is a wrath of God, in respect of sin and against sin, is declared so frequently both in the Old and New Testament, that they who call the doctrine in question must deny the authority of a large portion of revelation. Wrath is the displeasure of the personal God, the moral Governor, against sin, and the moving cause of that punishment which He righteously inflicts. Some, indeed, will have it that the anger of God is but another name for punishment, and maintain that the translators of Scripture would have better expressed the meaning of the sacred writers had they rendered the term in this way; for they think of it as the cause put for the effect. But there is no warrant for that conclusion; and we cannot concede that the term WRATH is used to express only the punishment of sin, or the effect of God’s displeasure (
Rom. 1:18, 2:5, 3:5). It is no mere effect, apart from the inward affections of a personal God. Were there nothing further than an impersonal moral constitution of the world, or had God left the world to take its course, indifferent to good or evil in His creatures, according to the Epicurean conception of providence, one might speak of the results of evil irrespective of the moral nature and moral feelings of an intelligent agent. But the world is not ruled by fate, nor by one indifferent to the moral actions of men, but by the living, personal God, who regards all things in relation to Himself and His moral government, and who has a holy displeasure at moral evil. Without ought of the turbulent emotion found in us, and which betrays human weakness, the supreme Lawgiver, from the perfection of His nature, is ANGRY AT SIN, because it is a violation of His authority, and a wrong to His inviolable majesty. Though He cannot be injured, as men commonly understand the term injury, He may be wronged by the creature’s refusal to acknowledge His divine authority. How can any have such mean conceptions of God, as to make Him an indifferent spectator of human affairs and conduct involving His own rights? Can He look with equal indifference and equal satisfaction on piety and impiety, virtue and vice, wisdom and folly, the morally beautiful and the morally disordered?

But may not wrath be in some sense reduced to love, or to a certain modification of divine love, as has often been asserted, and is maintained by a great number of divines in the present day? We answer most emphatically, No. However men may perplex their minds in speculating on the divine attributes, by reducing them to one in their artificial theories, that conclusion to which I have adverted is contrary to the plain teaching of Scripture. Wrath is not to be subsumed under love, nor represented as either love–sorrow or the fire–zeal of love. 133 It is not the feeling of offended love, nor divine sorrow at the creature’s froward disobedience. These are poor dreams of the human mind speculating on God, without dependence on the word of revelation, by which alone we can know Him. It is unbiblical to say, that a God who has wrath is not a God who loves; but it is scarcely less so to affirm that God is angry because He loves. Consistently carried out, these speculations run counter to the forensic idea of satisfaction, and are at variance with any due recognition of
law, guilt, or punishment. The objective reality of divine wrath, on the supposition of sin, is an axiom or first principle in natural theology (Rom. 1:32), as well as in the theology of revelation. All speculations of an opposite character ignore the fact and criminality of sin.

Wrath, in biblical phraseology, therefore, is an essential mood of the divine mind in respect of sin; and were we to deny the objective reality of divine wrath, we should be compelled to weaken and dilute the meaning of all Scripture. The passages in which the term WRATH occurs amount to many hundreds, many of which are so definite, that they, beyond all doubt or controversy, bring before us what is essential to the divine nature. Thus, when God SWEARS IN His WRATH, that is, swears by that essential attribute of His nature which leads Him to hate and punish sin, no doubt can be entertained that this is a quality or property of God (Ps. 95:11). It is a perfection having its root in the moral excellence of the living God: it is proportioned to men’s conduct: and, in a word, it is inseparable from the idea which we form, and must form, of the activity of a personal God in regard to moral evil (Heb. 3:11; Rom. 9:22). 134

Nor is it unworthy of God to represent Him by a phraseology borrowed from human feelings: for this is no mere anthropomorphism, but a delineation of His real displeasure at sin. Hatred, in like manner, or a real aversion to sinners surrendering themselves to sinful courses, is ascribed to God; and it is not represented as a figure of speech: it is an amiable moral excellency (Rom. 9:13; Rev.2:15). And there is no reason to repudiate this biblical idea—because it has its analogue in man—or to call the wrath of God a mere anthropomorphism; for the Bible always speaks of God’s attributes in words borrowed from human qualities, which indeed, with the due distinctions drawn between the Creator and creatures made in His image, are common to both. What sort of excellence would it be in man, to be morally indifferent, and to have neither aversion nor anger at sin? In a word, the idea of divine wrath prompting retribution for moral
disobedience, is involved in our very idea of God as a personal God and moral governor: it is inseparable from the fact of sin; it is presupposed in the atonement; and it must be carried with us into any conception which is formed of future retribution.

2. Now the great question on which the atonement may be said to depend is, Did Christ bear this wrath of God, the chief element of which is the privation of God? As this is affirmed or denied—and opinion in modern times has very much come to be divided into two schools upon the point—the real doctrine of the atonement is either maintained or denied. The objective reality of Christ’s atoning work is found to consist in the propitiation of the divine wrath. That is evident from these plain texts of Scripture in Thessalonians,, and from the statements that He was made sin (1 Cor. 5:21); that He was made a curse for us (Gal. 3:13); and that we are saved from wrath through Him (Rom. 5:9). This point is undoubted from the evidence of texts, and it is equally certain from the fact of substitution considered as a real transaction. Either the Lord entered vicariously into our position, responsibility, and guilt, or He did not. If He did—as all the texts bearing upon the atonement abundantly evince—then He divine wrath, that is, the divine desertion, as the Mediator between God and man, subjecting Himself to all that had devolved upon humanity as the curse of sin. His substitution was not, indeed, identity. He could therefore be the object of the divine wrath in our place, while still the beloved Son and the sinless man. He was made sin while sinlessly perfect and accepted: He was made a curse while yet the faultless servant: He was the object of true punishment, and of all that goes to constitute true wrath, as He stood in our place to bear what was due to us for sin, while in Himself the Son of His love (Col. 1:13), and the approved and accepted second Adam, and never more the object of His approval than when He offered Himself for others (John 10:17). We draw the distinction between the personal and the official.

It only remains to add, that He who comes to Christ, and is found in Him, shall never see wrath. The whole divine wrath is legitimately removed by Christ, for Christ’s work of atonement can never be thought of without
the wrath of God. Our deliverance, too, is a present deliverance from wrath incurred: for there is no truth in the representation that divine wrath belongs to eschatology alone, and is only for the rejecters of Christ.

II. A second text, referring to the disarming of death and the removal of its sting by the atonement, is as follows: *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so they also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him* (1 Thess. 4:14). The passage was designed to comfort Christians mourning the loss of fellow-Christians; and in doing this, Paul points to the relation in which they stood to Jesus. Sometimes the words SLEEPING THROUGH JESUS have been viewed as referring to the case of martyrs SUFFERING for the cause of Christ. But that mode of expression is quite unlike the ordinary language of Scripture in speaking of suffering for Christ. The apostle intends to present to the Thessalonians a certain argument based on the atonement, thus: If we believe that Jesus died for His people’s sins, and rose again, then certain results or effects are referred to as standing connected both with His death and resurrection. First, as to the effect derived from His death, THEY SLEEP THROUGH JESUS: then, as to His resurrection, which means that He rose as the first-fruits of them who sleep, God will bring His people WITH HIM.

The object we have in view leads us to examine only the first of the two expressions, THEM THAT SLEEP THROUGH JESUS; for we must construe the words in this manner. The mode of construing which certain interpreters adopt, of connecting THROUGH JESUS with the verb SHALL BRING, labors under the intolerable defect of virtually repeating the same thing a second time: thus, “God will bring them through Jesus with Him.” But we next inquire what is specially intimated by the terms, “them that sleep through Jesus?” This has often been interpreted as intimating that believers retain in death the union with Christ which they enjoy. Though that idea underlies the terms, and cannot be separated from the clause, a much closer connection with the atonement may be discerned in the
arguementative form with which the verse begins. Plainly, the allusion is to something effected THROUGH JESUS, or by the death of Christ, as the medium of redemption. It means that death is to the Christian no longer a penalty, but a falling asleep; and this belongs to the Christian’s death in whatever form it may come, and with whatever accompaniments. The expression “sleep IN Jesus,” as it is put elsewhere (1 Cor. 15:18; Rev. 14:13), or THROUGH Jesus, as it is put here, has reference to the body, not to the disembodied soul, which is understood to be with the Lord: it means that death is not accompanied with the curse, but deprived of its sting (1 Cor. 15:56), and that the redeemed will rise out of it as from a sleep. The comfort which the apostle suggests, and the foundation of our confidence in the prospect of death, is the vicarious death of Jesus, His suretyship for His people.

III. Another passage in this epistle brings out in a striking way the life hid with Christ in God, as a further fruit of the atonement: Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him (1 Thess. 5:10). The immediately previous verse, as already noticed, had stated that Christians are not appointed to wrath, but to obtain salvation, that is, are appointed to acceptance on the ground of Christ’s atoning sacrifice. The primary fruit of the atonement, undoubtedly, is the reconciliation of the man, the acceptance of his person. Though that is the direct and immediate consequence of the Lord’s death, it is followed by another; and this second result is the renovation of the nature as well as the rectification of the personal relation. These two, person and nature, though both affected by the atonement—the one immediately, the other mediatley—are not to be confounded together, nor opposed to each other. In reality, subordinates neither conflict with each other nor exclude each other. Christ died, in the first place, to deliver us from wrath (1 Thess. 5:9): He died, too, to make us partakers of His life (ver. 10).

The final clause brings out what the Lord expressly planned and intended by His propitiatory death: “That (ina) we might live together with Him.” In the expression, LIVE TOGETHER WITH HIM the thought is,
that the life of the church collective, and of individual Christians singly, is so hid with Christ, and bound up with Him, that they are NEVER FOR A MOMENT SUNDERED from Him, either in their earthly life or in their disembodied state. It is a general statement of which there are elsewhere many echoes or expressions (Col. 3:3; Rom. 14:9). Several thoughts may be said to be contained in the expression, as follows: He bought them to be His possession, or purchased flock; He died to be their Lord; and He aimed, by so dying, to give them a life like His own—a life together with Him. As to the expressions, WHETHER WE WAKE OR SLEEP, they are very variously interpreted. But we have no doubt that they refer to the Christian’s life in the body, and to the Christian’s life in the separate state (see 1 Thess. 4:14). They are not here used figuratively for moral or spiritual conditions, as in the earlier section of the chapter, where WAKING and SLEEPING must be so understood (1 Thess. 5:6–8). The whole terms of this clause have generally, but needlessly, been limited to the time of the second advent, as if they merely intimated that at that moment the saints should live together with Christ, whether they were alive or fallen asleep. But there is no need for this limitation: they apply to all times: all this is as true now as it will be then.

Section 11.—The Epistles to Timothy.

The three epistles next in order, from their scope commonly called pastoral epistles, do not contain many testimonies to the atonement. As to the first epistle,
it appears that on one occasion Paul left Timothy in Ephesus, to consolidate the doctrine of the large congregation there, when he went into Macedonia (1 Tim. 1:3). He hoped to return shortly, but despatched this epistle to his fellow–laborer, to direct him how to act in the house of God, the church of the living God (3:15). There were erratic tendencies already appearing in Ephesus, as we explained above in noticing the epistle to that church: a teaching of the law (1:7), and a science falsely so called (6:20); in opposition to which Paul points out the way of salvation by grace (1:14 – 17), and the Lord’s manifestation in the flesh,—obvious allusions to the incarnation and atonement (3:16).

The second Epistle to Timothy was plainly written when Paul was on the verge of martyrdom (2 Tim. 4:6), containing parting words of direction to his son in the faith, whose presence he requests in a time of trial. Allusions to the atonement are to be found in this epistle—obvious enough to any one reading for personal satisfaction, though not such as we would adduce to a gainsayer. Thus Paul speaks of the epiphany, or first advent of our Savior Jesus Christ, who abolished death (2 Tim. 1:10). Again, the apostle uses language of which we have had many similar specimens already: “If we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him” (Rom. 6:1–12; 2 Cor. 5:14).

The only text to be particularly expounded is the following: *For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus; who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified [literally, the testimony ] in due time. Whereunto I am ordained a preacher (1 Tim. 2:5–7).* The apostle began with directions as to the church assemblies, directing that Christians in their worship should pray for all men, for kings and all in authority; that is, for all ranks, conditions, and classes of men. The apostle was thus led by a natural transition to speak of the unity of God, and the one mediator between God and man.
1. As to this designation of Christ, it must be remembered that a MEDIATOR is one who comes between two contending parties to remove the cause of contention, and restore them to friendship. In this case, a mediator was one who stepped in between God as an offended Judge, and men as guilty sinners (vers. 3 and 4), to pacify God, and restore men to favor. In this sense, Jesus is called a mediator between God and men; that is, men needing to be saved (ver. 4). And this mediator is not a mere teacher, not a moral reformer, not a mediator of intercession, but of reconciliation, who removes the cause of quarrel by making reparation for the wrong (see 1 John 2:1, 2). That is the meaning in the text before us, as indubitably appears from the appended participial clause in the Greek, which states that He was mediator, as He gave Himself a ransom for all.

The words are so definite, that they will not permit us to explain them, as saying that He became a mediator when He ascended; for the participial clause (relative clause in the English version) means that He was a mediator in giving Himself a ransom. He did not give Himself, and then become a mediator: He was a mediator on earth when He died and gave Himself.

Christ was a mediator, not as He acted the part of a messenger, or made known the divine will, but as He ushered in redemption. The nature of the office presupposed the inability of the sinner, and was distinctly announced in many passages (Jer. 30:21). The mediator must possess true humanity and true Godhead in one person; and the reason is obvious. He must be TRUE MAN, according to the obligations of those whom He represented before God, with a compassion for the erring, (Heb. 4:15), and a nature holy and undefiled, to obey and suffer (Heb. 7:26). He must be TRUE GOD, not only to sustain the humanity, but to give His work a value equivalent to everlasting punishment, and make His obedience adequate to the wants of millions. Deity and humanity were united in one person for a work to which each nature contributed its part, with a concurrent action at every step. The theory that makes the Lord mediator in one nature, whether in the divine, as Osiander held, or in the human, as the Church of Rome and Stancarus put it, never commended itself to scriptural divines.
But if so, why does the apostle designate Christ THE MAN CHRIST JESUS? In many passages he describes Christ as a divine person; but in this passage, when speaking of the mediator, he appends the designation MAN, because he is about to speak of His sufferings and death. Another reason was, that among the Ephesians a certain inclination began to discover itself toward the Gnostic errors which sought the root of all evil in matter or corporeity, and thus naturally led them to the notion that our Lord had but a phantom body—a semblance of manhood. Paul therefore calls Him the MAN Christ Jesus. The Apostle John, too, at a later time referred to those who denied that Jesus Christ was come in the flesh (1 John 4:2, 3). They undermined the death of the Son of God, and, with the death, the atonement as a satisfaction to justice. These theories are here exploded, first by the designation MAN, descriptive of the Lord’s person; then by the names CHRIST JESUS, which prove that He was the Christ, the unique man. This is brought out when He is represented as one mediator between God and man; that is, one who interposed between two divided parties, and occupied the singular relation in the universe of mediating between God and the human family of all time. While very man, He was thus unique man, having no equal nor parallel.

2. But it is added, He GAVE HIMSELF A RANSOM FOR ALL, meaning that the surrender of His life was the price or ransom by which He obtained men’s deliverance from captivity. Every expression and word here has a deep significance, and they are nearly a repetition of Christ’s own saying (Matt. 20:28). The phrase HE GAVE HIMSELF has much force, indicating boundless love to us, and obedience to His Father; in a word, priestly action, the reality of the typical worship. He gave Himself, according to the divine decree, spontaneously or freely.
3. The word RANSOM denotes the price by which one is discharged from captivity, with the further thought, as it occurs here, that the Deliverer encounters something similar to the evil impending over him who is delivered, or such a ransom as is made by something given in exchange for another. But are there in this transaction the criteria of a real ransom, and all its constituent elements? Yes. 1. We have captives to be redeemed,—men whose guilt or liability to bondage too plainly appears from the fact that they are under sin (Rom. 3:9), under the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13), in bondage to death, and to the fear of death (Heb. 2:14).

2. The Redeemer is here called the mediator, by whom the price was paid. That Christ is so represented, there is no doubt (Rom. 11:26; Gal. 3:13). 3. The ransom is announced in the most unmistakeable terms by our Lord elsewhere (Matt. 20:28), and by the apostle in this text, as consisting in the priestly action of giving Himself in our room. 4. The party receiving the ransom is God, considered as Lawgiver, Ruler, and Judge, whose property we were by creation–right, and whose property we become anew by redemption–right (Rev.5:9). When we put these elements together,—the captive, the Redeemer, the ransom, the party who held the sinner till he received the necessary equivalent to the inflexible claims of His law, and who then takes them into a new endearing relation as His purchased property,—we have all the elements of a real transaction. It was not metaphorical, but real.

Against the above–mentioned outline of this great fact the most determined opposition has always been evinced by all who stand opposed to our Lord’s vicarious life and sufferings. They challenge the doctrine on the ground of reason and rectitude; to which the reply is, that we abide by the authority of the divine word. Sometimes they venture to assert that no passage of Scripture can be adduced where it is said that Christ suffered all in our room and stead; and they interpret the words FOR US as intimating merely that He suffered for our good. No one acquainted with the Greek language, and taking into account the composition of the word here used (antilutron), will assert that it does not
naturally and competently convey the idea of a ransom in the room of others. It cannot be conceded, that to give Himself to death for others means no more than to die in some vague, indefinite way for one’s good. On the contrary, the clause contains a double evidence for vicarious atonement. We had, by the transgression of the divine law, become bound to punishment, and must on account of guilt have forever passed into the captivity of Satan, death, and hell, had not Christ acted the part of mediator, as described in the text. But when one is cast into prison for his sins, and another redeems him from it by repairing the wrong and meeting his obligations, this was not only for his good merely, but also in his stead.

One principal argument against the death of Christ, viewed as a ransom from captivity, is to the effect that no party can be pointed out to whom the ransom could be paid. The answer to that objection is obvious to any one who rises to the primary source of authority—law and obligation. The ransom or satisfaction was paid to God (Eph. 5:2). In commercial matters, and cases involving, payment in money, we may hold one style of language, with all its correlative terms and notions. In criminal law another style of thought is necessary: we rise to the fountain of justice. In the great transaction of satisfying God’s punitive justice, and vindicating the divine majesty and the authoritative claims of law, we are brought directly to God Himself, as moral Governor and personal God, having rights from which He cannot recede, because they are inalienable. As sinners, men are guilty before God (Ps. 51:4; Rom. 3:19); and hence the ransom must be primarily viewed as offered TO Him, and accepted BY Him (Rev. 5:9).

According to the crude opinion of some of the Fathers, the atonement was too much considered in relation to Satan. Some, following Origen, imagined that the ransom was paid to him because, in the loose mode of thinking which they permitted themselves to entertain, it was alleged that Satan had acquired a rightful claim to fallen humanity, such as God Himself must respect. That groundless notion, though it kept its place for a time,
never carried general consent. It was at variance with the Christian sentiment; and the difficulties connected with the idea of offering a ransom to Satan, for a conquest sinfully acquired, were always felt by judicious divines of all centuries. They who perceived the necessity of a different mode of statement in the early centuries, connected the atonement with the original menace against sin, and represented it as a satisfaction to the divine veracity. 141

Satan’s relation to men held captive under his dominion was but subordinate. Sinful men were indeed in bondage to Satan, but his power was founded simply on the guilt of that sin in which he involved them, or on the right of conquest which he had effected. He was but the jailor, having no power over his captives except by God’s authority, who left them under a just doom—under sin, death, and hell. But, in the proper acceptation of terms, men are guilty to God: against Him, and Him only, was sin committed (Ps. 51:4). The party to whom the ransom was paid is evident. When we look at the analogy of human law—that is, at man made in the image of God, and acting out his views of right and wrong in a sphere closely resembling the divine procedure—a satisfaction for the infraction of the law is never made to the inferior officer, but to the Supreme Majesty, the fountain of authority. To the jailor or executioner it falls merely to carry out the sentence of imprisonment or death upon the criminal. In this great transaction of which we treat, the ransom was not paid to the inferior officer, but to the fountain of authority—the Judge of all. The ransom or satisfaction was paid to God; for there was none besides Him or beyond Him. And His sovereign plan was to discharge the captives only on receiving the ransom of His Son’s obedience and death.

One consideration, too much omitted in theories of the atonement, will put this matter in its true light. We must distinguish between SIN ITSELF, and the consequences, temporal and eternal, corporeal and mental, inevitably flowing from it by the connection of cause and effect. The redemption—work of Christ
cannot be viewed merely in relation to the consequences of sin, but in relation to sin itself. And we consider it in a biblical way only when we study it with a full recognition of the fact that infinite guilt renders an infinite satisfaction necessary, nay, absolutely indispensable.

Two things remain to be noticed: first, the sense in which we are to take the apostle’s words, a ransom FOR ALL; secondly, how we are to apprehend Paul’s testimony in connection with it.

a. As to the expression “a ransom FOR ALL,” the meaning may be collected from the context. It is not all men numerically, but all conditions, ranks, classes, and nationalities, without distinction. This is so evident, that if we follow the rule of interpreting by the context, no doubt can remain on any mind. At the commencement of the chapter the apostle mentioned all men; and immediately adds, as an explanation of this use of the expression, “kings and all in authority,”—a superfluous addition, if we apprehend the terms as denoting absolute universality. When the apostle directs Christians to pray for all men, the allusion is to be understood as pointing out ranks, conditions and classes of men. This is evident, partly because they did not know all men numerically; partly because, among men in the wide sense, there are some for whom we are not to pray, viz. those who have sinned unto death (1 John 5:16). That the allusion is not to all men numerically, may be proved, too, from the announcement that God will have all men to be saved (ver. 14), which refers to ranks and conditions, not to individuals; for God’s will would be effectual on all men, if the other meaning were intended. Still further to show the sense in which Paul uses the expression ALL MEN, we may notice his mode of describing locality: “I will that men pray everywhere,” literally, in every place (ver. 8); which clearly means WHEREVER they may be.

This examination of the immediate context makes it evident how we are to understand the expression “a
ransom FOR: ALL.” We cannot put a different sense upon the terms than the apostle employs throughout the context; that is, all ranks, conditions, and classes of MEN. 142 He died for men of all conditions, high or low; for all nationalities, Jew and Gentile equally. But the text does not affirm that He gave Himself for all men numerically. The allusion is to all classes indiscriminately—the elect of every rank, and tribe, and people. More particularly, THE ALL for whom He gave Himself a ransom, were they for whom He acted as a mediator in atonement and intercession; THE ALL of whom it is said, God will have ALL men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth (ver. 4); the class undoubtedly coincident and identical with the elect; THE ALL for whom the ransom was offered—and it is never ineffectual or inoperative; THE ALL who are ushered into actual liberty, because their sins were borne, their guilt expiated, their curse reversed, and of whom not one shall finally be lost, but all shall be raised up at the last day (John 6:39). The passage was introduced in connection with prayer, and as a motive to prayer.

b. The second thing is, how we are to apprehend Paul’s testimony: “To be testified in due time, to which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle.” 143 The connection between the ransom and the testimony, between the atonement and the preaching of it, is most explicit, both here and elsewhere. The preaching is a testimony to the ransom, or to the cross: that is, the atonement was accomplished, and an office was instituted specially charged with the proclamation of this great theme; and preaching has no other foundation or warrant, power or influence. In this passage, with the solemnity of an oath, Paul declares that this was the scope of his ministry. After speaking of the Redeemer, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time, he adds, “to which I was appointed a preacher.” Paul, therefore, not only preached this truth of the vicarious sacrifice, but was called and commissioned to do so: HIS OFFICE WAS FOR THIS VERY END. To give the greater confirmation to what he said, he added—doubtless with his eye upon those who undervalued that great theme, the burden of his ministry—“I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not.”
Section 12.—The Epistle to Titus.

This pastoral epistle, in many respects like the Epistles to Timothy, but more condensed, was meant to direct Titus in a difficult service in the island of Crete, where Paul had recently labored: churches were to be organized and supplied with elders, and Titus was left behind to set in order what was wanting. The epistle served as his credentials, and as a rule for his guidance. Though it is difficult to fix the date, as the missionary tour to which reference is made is not elsewhere recorded, it bears on its front the immediate purpose for which it was composed; viz. to direct Titus, and give a code of rules for all time as to the qualifications of elders, and the mode of enforcing doctrine and duty. After stating duties incumbent on every age, sex, and condition, the apostle ascends to divine grace as the constraining motive (Tit. 2:11), referring also to the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior. From this he passes over to the atonement. The last chapter contains an outline of justification, which doubtless refers to the previous sketch of the expiatory sufferings of the Lord.

The single passage on the atonement demanding notice is this: *Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works* (Tit.)
2:14). Almost every word in this pregnant passage is significant.

1. The relative pronoun WHO has for its antecedent the double title applied to Christ in connection with His second advent: “our great God and Savior.” Undoubtedly the allusion is to one and the same person; and every one reading the passage for the first time, in the original, naturally comes to this conclusion. It is the glorious APPEARING of one person: the article is common to both titles; and the person so described is further pointed out as the same who gave Himself for us. What is intimated by connecting the atonement with His deity? It shows the close connection that obtains between them. The true Godhead of Christ was the element which gave infinite value to His sufferings. His atonement, though confined to a brief period, became at the divine tribunal a ransom, or an equivalent, adequate to the wants of millions, because the abasement of such a person had inestimable worth in God’s sight. When He died, it was as if all died; and the sacrifice was so valuable as well as acceptable, that instead of the curse which had been merited, the richest blessings were bestowed.

2. The simple affirmation, WHO GAVE HIMSELF FOR US, indicates two things—priestly action and vicarious sacrifice. As to the priestly action, we see that He gave Himself spontaneously; for the language is really sacrificial, borrowed from the Levitical worship. That defective typical economy, indeed, could not unite what were found in Christ—priest and victim. It is noteworthy that the Father, in many passages, is said to have given His Son; but when Christ is here and elsewhere described as giving Himself, we have priestly action exhibiting boundless love and voluntary obedience, and then a suffering victim,—in His soul forfeiting the joy which was properly His own, and in His body enduring the agony and shame allotted to a public criminal. As to the vicarious character of the action, this comes out in the words: FOR US, implying that when we should have been given up to the wrath of God, the Surety permitted our sins to be charged to Him. The same thing appears from other
words of the sentence, which plainly imply that we were IN ALL INIQUITY, and far from being God’s property. 145 We cannot read the words without the impression that they indicate substitution, or the action of one going into another’s place.

3. This brings us to the twofold aim or design which the Redeemer had in view when He gave Himself for us. These final particles expressive of intention ( ἐνα ) give us a glimpse into the Redeemer’s heart, and discover to us the purpose which He cherished.

a. The first of the two ends here mentioned is: “that He might redeem us from all iniquity.” The verb REDEEM ( λυτρώσχαι ) derived from the word denoting RANSOM, signifies a buying from captivity by the payment of a price. This is the primary signification of the word; and that this meaning attaches to it here is clear, because the price is expressed in the phrase, “who gave Himself for us.” Wherever the price is named, it is impossible to admit a metaphorical use of the term.

That there are cases where the word is used in the metaphorical sense, may be admitted; but in such a usage the primary sense is presupposed. The strange argument used by the opponents of the Lord’s ransom is, that we are to take the term in all cases in its secondary or figurative sense; that is, as intimating deliverance absolutely conferred, and not on the ground of a ransom. In short, they would have the metaphorical sense the uniform usage. That is simply inadmissible when the ransom or price is expressly named. When redemption is named in connection with the incarnation, the blood, the death of Christ, it is absurd to say that we must take the word REDEEM for absolute deliverance. How does the matter stand? A word primarily denoting deliverance by price is found along with the mention of ransom–price. It is impossible in such a case to say that this is the figurative or secondary signification: for that is contradicted by the words appended, indicating the
ground on which the deliverance is effected. In short, we have cause and effect together in too many cases to allow the least shade of doubt as to the causal connection between Christ’s blood as the ransom–price and the redemption (1 Pet. 1:18; Rev.5:9; Gal. 3:13).

The question is not, whether the term “redemption” may be taken in the general sense of deliverance, but whether, when connected with the blood of Christ, it can be so taken. The words so placed naturally suggest the ransom–price on the ground of which redemption is effected. It is asked, Is not the word used for absolute deliverance in the case of the national deliverance of Israel from Egypt and Babylon (Mic. 6:4), and in the case of corporeal deliverance where nothing touches the element of justice? (Heb. 11:35.) It may seem so. But even in such cases, according to the laws of language, more or less of the idea of compensation will be found (Eph. 5:16). Wherever allusion is made to the work of Christ, however, as the ransom which is taken into account, and which of necessity intervenes, the word occurs in its strictly philological import. The modern opponents of Christ’s propitiatory death, after the example of the old Socinian, maintain that even in this case the word is to be accepted as denoting absolute deliverance; but they argue from foregone conclusions, without regard to the thought before them.

What does the apostle mean by ALL INIQUITY? When he says ALL, he excludes nothing: he comprehends sin, original and actual, and announces that we are redeemed from the penalty and guilt of all sin, considered as transgression of the divine law. The meaning is, that Christ redeemed us from sin, considered as guilt and entailing the curse of the law. Our great God and Savior transferred the curse to Himself. Free from personal guilt, He entered into the place of the guilty, and transferred their guilt to Himself, that we, in virtue of His sufferings, might be pronounced free of further obligation. His sufferings had the quality of a compensation, price, or ransom paid for a captive; and this bloody ransom
dissolved all connection between sin and our obligation to punishment, giving a right to liberty.

b. The second thing contemplated by the Lord in His death, was to PURIFY TO HIMSELF A PECULIAR PEOPLE. The two clauses, introduced by the same final particle ( \textit{ina} ) contain two different thoughts. The benefits expressed are equally connected with the cross. The idea conveyed by the term PURIFY is sacrificial. There are no fewer than six cognate terms—viz. PURIFY, SANCTIFY, SPRINKLE, SANCTIFY, WASH, CLEANSE—used by the apostles to point out the effect produced by sacrifice on those who were defiled by sin. The general sense attaching to them is this, that sinners, excluded by sin from a holy God, are freed from impurity and readmitted to fellowship with God by blood. That is the meaning of the term PURIFY in the passage now under consideration.

The counterpart of these things—redemption and purification—we find in Israel’s typical history. Redemption from EGYPT was followed by the Sinaitic covenant, where the same people were taken into a new standing, as a kingdom of priests, to be a peculiar people to Himself. \textsuperscript{146} ( Deut. 7:6 ). There is little doubt that Paul had his eye on that fact, and on the passages descriptive of it ( Ex.19:5, 6 ). Christ’s people, redeemed by the true paschal lamb, and then admitted to a new covenant, are a true counterpart of the figurative covenant people. The apostle finely alludes to the redemption from Egypt, and then to the entering into covenant with God at Sinai as a people sprinkled with blood, and henceforth near to Israel’s holy God ( Ex.24:8 ). The design of that redemption was the consecration or setting apart of the nation to be a people near to Him; and the immediate effect of Christ’s redemption is to separate a people from the world, for holy service, or for priestly worship. And the designations here applied to them are striking. They are called A PECULIAR PEOPLE, which means His OWN people, with the accessory idea of being a peculiar treasure, precious, and kept with care \textsuperscript{147} ( Deut. 14:2, 24:18 ). They are His treasure, held to be most precious.
Next, the additional designation, ZEALOUS or GOOD WORKS, assumes that they are partakers of the spirit of holiness (Rom. 1:4), and of the sanctification of the Spirit (1 Pet. 1:2). This comprehends the sober, righteous, and godly life already mentioned (ver. 12), as becomes men inhabited by the Spirit of God. They bear fruit, and zealously labor to bear it, as the end of their redemption, and as is worthy of a dedicated people.