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“Substitution” and the “Vicarious Atonement”

by — Arthur P. Adams (1845-1925)

The common idea of the so-called “Vicarious Atonement” is offensive and repugnant to the principles of justice and fair play. Furthermore, this popular idea misrepresents God, distorts the truth of His Word into deformities, and obscures the great truth that Jesus Christ is the image of God, the most perfect revelation of the Father that we have.



THE RELIGIOUS SCHEME OF “SUBSTITUTION”

We are told that man having been created upright, pure and innocent, broke God’s law, thereby becoming a child of the devil, and falling under God’s wrath and curse, with the penalty of the broken law being “eternal death,” *i.e., a death that never dies, i.e., again, endless life in torment.* God wishes to save man, but He cannot do it until His “justice” is satisfied. Man cannot be freely pardoned, and the penalty fully remitted; he, or someone else must suffer the penalty before God can be pacified and the sinner forgiven and restored to the divine favor.

Now if man suffers the penalty of the broken law it would be his total undoing, since that penalty is “endless torment,” and yet the law must be vindicated; how shall it be done and yet save man? Thus orthodoxy answers, the Son of God offers Himself as man’s “substitute,” to suffer the penalty of the law “in his place,” instead of him.

God the Father accepts this “substitution,” and pours the vials of His wrath on the innocent Son in lieu of the guilty sinner, and thus “God is reconciled to man,” and pardon granted through Jesus Christ.

DOUBLE “SUBSTITUTION”

Still further burdening this dogma, we are told that, although the “substituting” of Christ’s sufferings is accepted in the place of the sufferings of the guilty, yet He did not suffer the penalty of the broken law at all, but

something which by a legal fiction was accepted in place of that penalty; so that there was, not only a “substitution” of an innocent victim for the guilty culprit, but there was also a “substitution” of another penalty totally different from the original one incurred by man. The penalty according to the popular view was “eternal death.” Christ does not suffer this penalty, but simply a temporary death; but since Christ was a divine person, His sufferings make up in quality what they lack in quantity, so that they are accepted as equivalent to the penalty of the broken law. Thus there is a “substitution of victims,” and a “substitution of penalties.”

The church still further complicates this subject by telling us that it was not Christ’s divine nature that died, but His human nature; that as God, He could not die, but He died simply as man; and yet His temporary death, being that of a divine person, the “God-man,” it is considered equivalent to the “eternal death” of the sinner; in other words His divinity did not die, and yet it is His divinity that makes His death a full satisfaction to the law.

LEGAL TRICKERY

Finally, notwithstanding all of this quibble and legal trickery, the alleged purpose of it, the pardon and salvation of man, will only be partially accomplished, a great many being “eternally lost” in spite of the death of Christ and this wonderful scheme of “atonement;” thus it is made to appear as though God had outraged justice and reason in the elaboration of a plan which would, after all, in a great measure fail to accomplish the end in view – the redemption of the fallen race.

Now no intelligent, thoughtful, unprejudiced person needs to be told that this whole scheme is unreasonable in every particular. In the first place, God was responsible for the introduction of evil into the world. He allowed it to come in contact with the man Whom He had made,

(see *ATONEMENT*, page 3069)

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- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
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ATONEMENT (continued from front page)

when, of course, He might have prevented it, well knowing what the result would be. Furthermore, where is the righteousness or justice in affixing such a fearful doom as unending torture, as the penalty of a single transgression. Yet again, what sort of justice is it that can be satisfied with the sufferings of an innocent person in the place of the guilty party? In addition to all of this, we are told that Christ did not suffer the penalty of man's transgression, but something else entirely different that was accepted as equivalent to it, and that, after all, the whole arrangement will in a great measure fail to accomplish the purpose intended. Here we have a scheme that is as unlike God and His ways as darkness is unlike light.

GOD AT ODDS WITH HIS SON?

Furthermore, such a scheme puts the Father and the Son in contradiction to each other. Jesus so loved mankind that He was willing to die in their "stead" that they might be redeemed. God was so severe and unrelenting that He would not forgive man without a Victim on Whom to visit His wrath, and so unjust as to accept an innocent Victim in place of the guilty party. According to this scheme, the love of Jesus is magnified, but God exhibits only relentlessness and implacability. If the hymn is true that "Jesus paid it all, all the debt I owe," then certainly I have no reason to thank God for freeing me from the curse, for He has received His full payment; and the only One Whom I should praise is the Lord Jesus Christ for paying my debt. However, let us endeavor to learn the truth of this great subject from the Bible.

WHAT'S BEHIND THE ERROR OF "SUBSTITUTION"

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

THE STARTING PLACE

We start out in this investigation then with the declaration that "God is love," and that it was God's love that was the great moving cause in reconciliation. It was not Christ, but GOD Who wrought out the wondrous plan. It was not God's justice, but His LOVE that is most manifested in the plan. All was love, because "God is love." Justice was on the sinner's side, not against him. Justice must be satisfied, indeed; but the only way that it could

be satisfied was not by the sinner's or some substitute's damnation, but by the most abundant provision being made for his salvation. Our God is "*a just God and a SAVIOR*" (Isaiah 45:21), a Savior because He is just. "*He that is our God is the God of salvation*" (Psalm 68:20). This is His great distinguishing characteristic from all that are called "gods" worshipped as such (cf. Isaiah 45:20).

WHY CHRIST DIED

Nowhere in the Bible is the idea advanced that the sufferings of Christ were a satisfaction to the law in lieu of the sufferings of the guilty man. Such an idea is repugnant to all principles of justice and righteousness. There is not a single passage that teaches directly or indirectly that the death of Christ was to satisfy the justice of God, but that "*to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living*" (Romans 14:9). "*God is not the God of the dead*" (Matthew 22:32), but Christ took on Himself our humanity and thus died, in order that He might be one with the race in death as well as in life. The Lord Jesus Christ stands at the head of the race, for He was the only human being Who was "*holy, harmless and undefiled*" (Hebrews 7:26). He also stands at the head of the race in His exaltation, for He is "*the Beginning, that in all things He might have the preeminence*" (Colossians 1:18). Thus, is He "*Lord [head or chief] both of the dead and of the living.*"

IT'S ALL ABOUT GOD

The two points for us to notice and keep in mind in our study of this doctrine are, first, love was the motive power, and second, God was the prime mover.

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16).

Any view that contradicts or obscures these two facts must be erroneous. A view that makes God's justice the prominent attribute in reconciliation to the obscuration or compromising of His love cannot be correct. A view that exalts Christ as man's Redeemer in opposition or even in contrast with God in the same work is certainly a false view.

Christ is indeed man's Redeemer, but under God; God redeems man, just as He judges him, "*by that Man Whom He has ordained*" (Acts 17:31). Christ is indeed our Savior, but He is a Savior as God's representative, God's agent; the Father is the original, supreme, "*God our Savior,*" (I Timothy 2:3). "*All things are of God*" (Romans 11:36).

AN ANGRY GOD Vs. A LOVING SAVIOR

The error into which the great majority of the church ►



has fallen upon is in adopting a scheme that makes Christ loving, tender and compassionate, and at the same time represents God as harsh, implacable and unjust. I do not say that God is intentionally thus represented, but practically He is so represented. For example, the following orthodox hymn so represents him.

Jesus Christ who stands between
Angry Heaven and guilty man,
Undertakes to buy our peace;
Gives the covenant of grace.

The above hymn represents an “angry” God held back and “bought” off by a loving, compassionate Savior; thus God’s true character and boundless love is obscured, and indeed falsified.

All of the formulated creeds of “orthodox” Christianity set forth the same false view. The Westminster Confession formulates the dogma thus:

The Lord Jesus, by His perfect obedience and sacrifice of Himself, which He through the eternal spirit once offered up unto God, hath fully satisfied the justice of His Father, and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father hath given unto Him.

Here we have that unscriptural and offensive idea of Christ’s dying to satisfy the Father’s justice, the innocent instead of the guilty, and thereby purchasing His goodwill; as though God must be appeased and pacified with the blood of a victim, like a pagan deity, before He will look favorably on a suppliant.

In the creed of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in the second “article of religion” we find it expressly stated that Christ died *to reconcile God to man*, a statement which is just the opposite of the truth!

MAN RECONCILED TO GOD, NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND

The Scriptures invariably put the statement the other way around, that Christ died *to reconcile man to God*, not God to man, and the difference between those two statements is as wide as the difference between a lie and the truth.

When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son (Romans 5:10).

God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself (II Corinthians 5:19).

God was not reconciling Himself to the world, He was reconciling world to Himself. See also Colossians 1:20-22, and every other passage where reconciliation is spoken of. Let it be noticed also in this connection that II

Corinthians 5:19 fully confirms the statement already made that God is the prime mover in reconciliation. We usually speak as though Christ made the reconciliation: He has reconciled us to God; He is our propitiation; He is our advocate with the Father; all of this is true if we recognize the fact that in all this Christ is God’s Agent, and that God is really the Principal. God is our Savior, Redeemer and Judge, as we have seen, “*by that Man Whom He hath ordained*,” and God is also our Reconciler, for “*God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself*.” How contrary is this statement to the view presented by the creeds referred to above!

GOD – THE RECONCILER

So far from its being true that a substitute must do something to appease God – to conciliate His favor, to satisfy His justice, to purchase His good will, to reconcile Him to us – the truth is that God Himself conciliates man, to reconcile man to Himself! The idea would be absurd that God was in Christ reconciling Himself to the world, endeavoring to pacify Himself – to conciliate Himself!

The truth is most blessed and comforting that “*God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself*.” This is *glad tidings* indeed! O for that time when *all* will hear it! There is no “angry Heaven” Whose wrath must be appeased and Whose favor must be purchased, but a loving Father Who Himself is “*working*” (John 5:17) to win back the prodigal to the arms that are ever stretched out to receive him, and the heart that has never ceased to love him.

WHY A MEDIATOR?

Now someone may ask, “If the foregoing is true, why do we need any Mediator at all?” I reply, we *DO* need a mediator to make known this great love of God *to us*, because we are ignorant of God’s “*good will to men*” (Luke 2:14), and in our blindness and hardness of heart think Him harsh and unloving so that we need one who is the “*express image of the invisible God*” (Colossians 1:15) and yet at the same time “*bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh*” to mediate between us and God, not to plead with God on our behalf – there is no need of that since “*The Father Himself loves us*” (John 16:27) – but to reveal the Father to us, as it is written,

No man knows the Son but the Father; neither knows any man the Father save the Son and He to whomsoever the Son shall reveal Him (Matthew 11:27).

We cannot love Him until we learn that He loves us:

We love Him because He first loved us (I John 4:19).

This is the very thing that the world does not know; as Jesus said,



O righteous Father, the world has not known You
(John 17:25).

Jesus Christ “manifests” the Father’s love. Through Him we “perceive” His love (I John 3:16; 4:9) and thereby come to know that God loves us, and thus we *begin* to love Him and so are reconciled to Him, and as,

God shines in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Christ Jesus ... we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord (II Corinthians 4:6; 3:18).

WHY AN ADVOCATE?

Did you ever think of the strangeness of the expression, “an Advocate with the Father” (I John 2:1), taking the term “advocate” in the legal sense in which it is usually understood? If God is our Father, why do we need an advocate with Him?

Does a child have to engage the services of an attorney to represent him and plead his cause to his own father? If the child was estranged from his father and was ignorant of the father’s true character and relation, he might suppose that he needed such a go-between – and this in fact is just what the Christian world supposes – but this is not the actual state of the case.

The Father is most kindly disposed toward us already; He is really and truly a Father; hence no one needs to plead with Him for His children. However, the children are estranged; they are ignorant of the Father’s great love for them, hence they need a mediator, an advocate, *i.e.*, as the word strictly means, a helper with the Father. The Father needs no such helper to reconcile Him to His children, for He was never unreconciled; but the children need it in order to make known the Father’s good will to them, and to awaken their confidence in Him so as to bring about harmony between them, *i.e.*, to “set them at one again” (Acts 7:26).

WHO NEEDED TO BE RECONCILED?

Now the estrangement is *all* on man’s side; he is alienated from God, not God from him; hence in order to bring about harmony between them, man alone needs to be reconciled. The word rendered “reconcile” means to change completely; this is the strict meaning of the word. Now, who is it who must be changed in order to bring about harmony between God and man? Surely not God, but man; he must be changed, or reconciled, and he alone. Hence we can see how correct the Scriptures are in the use of this word, and how far out of the way are the creeds.

To say that the “vicarious atonement” reconciled God to man is to say that God must be changed in order to

bring about harmony between Him and His creation, a sentiment that we might well pronounce blasphemous. The scriptural way of putting it, however, is right: that Christ’s death was to reconcile man to God, *i.e.*, to change man from an enemy and thus “to set him at one” with the Father.

DON’T MISS THE BIG PICTURE

In order to make the foregoing still clearer and to further confirm it, we should take into connection with it the great truths of God’s plan of creation. We are God’s workmanship. The “fall” of man and his consequent alienation from his Maker was a part of God’s plan, and was to [attain] ultimate[ly] in his good; hence the abundant provision for his recovery is simply in keeping with that plan, and indeed necessary to its final accomplishment. If God allowed man to “fall” into sin and to become estranged from Himself for man’s good, then surely He would not fail to provide a way whereby man might be delivered from his sin, the “enmity” (Romans 8:7; Ephesians 2:15) be destroyed, and a perfect restoration effected to his former position of harmony and union with God.

In the light of these truths, we shall see that there was no need of, and no place for, substitution. In the first place, these truths deliver us from that false dogma of endless torment so that we know that this is not the penalty of the broken law. Man never was in peril of any such doom, and needed no substitute to suffer it for him or to pretend to suffer it for him by a legal quibble.

EVIL SERVES A DIVINE PURPOSE

Moreover, if evil is one of man’s educators, and always ultimate in good – if all of God’s judgments are for man’s benefit, that “*he might be partaker of His holiness*” (Hebrews 12:10), – if man, like his Lord, is “*made perfect through suffering*” (Hebrews 2:10), then why does he need a substitute to save him from any of these experiences?

All of these are God’s benefits, blessings in disguise, and the idea of a substitute to endure them instead of man is a scheme whereby man is to be robbed of a part of his blessings, a portion of his inheritance.

PASSAGES USED TO PROPAGATE “SUBSTITUTION”

If the above is true, how shall we understand such Scriptures as the following? He “*tasted death for every man*” (Hebrews 2:9), the “*just for the unjust*,” (I Peter 3:18) “*he bore our sins*” (I Peter 2:24) etc.

All of this class of Scripture is made plain when we notice the difference between two prepositions, “for” and “instead.” Christ died *for* us, but He did not die *instead* of us.





UNION, NOT "SUBSTITUTION"

In His death, He was man's companion, associate, "elder brother," but He was not man's Substitute. He suffered *with* man, being "*made in all things like unto His brethren*," and we follow Him as our Forerunner in just the same way that He trod – sharing His sufferings, bearing His reproach, "*being made comformable unto His death*" – thereby coming at last to be "*like Him*" (I John 3:2).

There is not a particle of substitution in all of this, but perfect *identity* of experience. We are one with Him in His humiliation, suffering and death, and one with Him in His exaltation, glory and resurrection life. Christ does not endure a penalty and certain sufferings, and a death, in order that we may not endure the same, as He would do if He was our substitute; but He endures the same sufferings and the same death that we endure, and He walked in the same "*ways of life*" (Acts 2:28) in which we must walk in order to reach "*the same image*."

WHAT ABOUT ISAIAH 53?

Even that supposed stronghold of substitution, the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, is in perfect harmony with the foregoing view. Read :4-5, then turn to Matthew 8:16-17 and see how this was fulfilled. Indeed, Christ "*bore our griefs and carried our sorrows*," not as a substitute, but as a sympathizing companion and friend. He was man's great Burden-bearer (sin included, see John 1:29), not that man might be exempted altogether from the burden (for "*every man shall bear his own burden*," Galatians 6:5), but that man might be taught how to bear it, the reason for bearing it, and above all, might be delivered from the death-load (Romans 7:24-25) in God's "*due season*."

ARE WE SAVED FROM SIN'S PENALTY, OR FROM SIN ITSELF?

This brings us to another point. The common idea is that Christ suffers for us, as our substitute, to save us from the penalty of sin, which is eternal death. However, the truth is that Christ died, as our Forerunner, to save us, not from the penalty of sin, but from sin itself, not from death (there is no such thing as "eternal death") but "*out of death*" (Hebrew 5:7).

The penalty of sin is valuable and beneficial, and it would be no kindness to man to save him therefrom. Moreover, if it was best for man to be saved from the penalty of his transgressions, God could and would remit that penalty without the interposition of any substitute or savior (see Ezekiel 18:21-22).

God Himself is "*a just God and a Savior*." Then, how shall man be saved from sin? How shall the sinner be made a saint? The question is not, how shall his sins be pardoned; how shall he escape the penalty? but how shall he be de-

livered "*from the body of this death*?" (Romans 7:24).

NOT SAVED FROM DEATH, BUT SAVED OUT OF DEATH

The answer comes, "*through Jesus Christ our Lord*" (Romans 8:1) by a "*new creation*" (II Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:10). This is nothing less than the deliverance of the "*whole creation*" "*from the bondage of corruption*" (Romans 8:21); and this work Christ (or "*God in Christ*") does. He is "*the lamb of God that bears away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29). Thus God "*made the iniquity of us all to meet on Him*" (Isaiah 53:6). God's purpose was not to save us *from* death, but to save us "*out of death*."

RELIGION'S LOW VIEW OF GOD

Oh, how low are our ideas of God's ways! Verily His thoughts are not our thoughts, nor are His ways our ways! (Isaiah 55:8-13). The highest idea that many Christians have is of a scheme whereby they are to be saved from the penalty of sin – an endless hell – when the truth is that God's purpose is to lift mankind out of this condition of death into "*life and immortality*" (II Timothy 1:10).

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! (Romans 11:33).

In this view also we see how thoroughly and absolutely reconciliation was "*of God*." If man is lost, he cannot find himself; if man is dead, he cannot give life to himself, or help himself in the least – "*We are God's workmanship*" (Ephesians 2:10).

ALL THINGS ARE OF GOD

Let it be noticed that it is in connection with this work of reconciliation that Paul makes the statement that "*all things are of God*":

All things are of God, Who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation, to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and has committed unto us the Word of reconciliation. Now then [this great work of reconciliation being all-complete and perfect, a finished work] we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God [God is reconciled to you; He has never been unreconciled; now be reconciled to Him]. For He has made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (II Corinthians 5:18-21).

Let it be noticed that the finished, completed work of reconciliation is made the ground of the invitation to the sinner to be reconciled to God. In the popular theology of the day it is put just the other way around. Preachers invite sinners to repentance and obedience in order that the work of reconciliation may be accomplished. Paul teaches us, however, to tell the impenitent sinner that the work of reconciliation is *ALREADY* done! *Therefore*, be reconciled to God. *So far as God is concerned*, the work is all done, so now, then, submit yourself to God that you may know this great truth practically, and may enjoy it to your heart's great comfort. (Read II Corinthians 1:3-7).

THE GLAD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY HAVE BEEN TURNED INTO THE SAD TIDINGS OF GREAT SORROW

The preacher should not call on the sinner to turn to God in order that he may be redeemed; but he is to declare to him first full redemption, and then make that the ground and the reason why he should turn to God.

So God speaks to His ancient people Israel by His prophet,

I have blotted out as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and as a cloud, your sins; return to Me, for I have redeemed you [not return to Me and I will redeem you, but, because I have redeemed you]. Sing, O heavens, for the Lord has DONE it! Shout, lower parts of the earth, break forth into singing you mountains, O forest, and every tree therein; for the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel (Isaiah 44:22-23).

O how glorious are the glad tidings of great joy, "*which shall be to all people!*" (Luke 2:10). Alas, how we mutilate it, and twist it out of shape, with our wretched man-made theology, and make it *sad tidings of great sorrow* to many who, lost and "*without strength*" (Romans 5:6), fail to fulfill the conditions which the church and not the Word has made the prerequisites of redemption!

Thus now, as of old, religious leaders "*shut up the kingdom of heaven against men*" (Matthew 23:13). They put the cause for the effect, and the effect for the cause; they make the ground of man's repentance the end of that repentance, thus making the accomplishment of God's work dependent on poor, weak man, thereby representing reconciliation no better than the law.

Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! (Isaiah 5:20-21).

IT'S GOD'S DONE DEAL!

Surely there is an infinite difference between God's "*I have **done** it,*" and [religion's portrayal], "*I will do it if you will do thus and so.*"

Christ, "*Who knew no sin, was made sin*" (II Corinthians 5:21), partaking of human nature (see Hebrews 2:14-18), and thus we are "*made the righteousness of God in Him,*" partaking, through Christ, of the "*divine nature*" (see II Peter 1:4).

GOD'S LOVE LED TO CHRIST'S WORK

God is represented in the common view as being very wrathful and furious against man for having broken His law; but Christ steps in and pacifies the Father by the "vicarious atonement," and His anger is turned away and He begins to love mankind, and this "vicarious atonement" is made the cause of God's love. The love of God is represented as a result flowing out of Christ's work; the language of the creeds fully imply this; and this in fact is practically the view of the majority of Christians. The truth is the *opposite* of this. God's love led to Christ's work; it does not flow from it. All Scripture puts it this way.

*God so loved the world [and the result was] **that** He gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16).*

The Lord Jesus Christ "manifests" the Father's pre-existing, but unknown love, and "*hereby we perceive it*" (I John 3:16; 4:9), so that discovering that "*He first loved us,*" we begin to love Him.

God commends His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).

Thus, Scripture makes it plain that God's love was *the cause*, and not *the effect* of the work of Christ. This is the blessed truth; but the church goes on, reversing God's truth, putting darkness for light, and light for darkness.

RECONCILIATION: A PERFECT, ABSOLUTE AND UNIVERSAL SUCCESS!

Finally, one more point of error in the popular view. Reconciliation will not be partial, but a complete and absolute success! The creeds that instill the errors that we have noticed may well culminate with the statement that, after all that God and Christ have done, myriads, through ignorance and perversity, will fail to reap any benefit from it and will perish forever. Thus, Christ will only *partially* accomplish the purpose for which He died, to reconcile the world to God, and will only *partially* "*destroy the works of the Adversary*" (I John 3:8).



Is it so? Will the joint work of the Father and the Son thus weakly fail of full completion, and fall short of a perfect triumph? No! So far from its being true that it will be only partially sufficient to accomplish the work intended, the truth is that it will be “*much more*” than enough. Read Romans 5 and see this glorious truth set forth therein. Notice Paul’s “*much more*,” and let all doubts as to the “*exceeding abundance*” of God’s gracious provision for man’s universal redemption forever depart from your mind.

Was God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, and yet will there be myriads of souls unreconciled to Him through all eternity? Did the Father send the Son to be the Savior of the world (I John 4:14), and yet will there be a large portion of the world lost forever? Will God’s plans and purposes miscarry like this, or shall “*His Word* [Christ is “*the Word of God*”!] *accomplish that which He pleases, and prosper in the thing whereto He sends it*” (Isaiah 55:8-13), not returning to Him void?

TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE?

Let those who wish to “*limit the Holy One*” (Psalm 78:41) attempt to do so; but as for me, I believe God will do all that He has promised to the full, yes more, for,

He is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we can ask, or even think (Ephesians 3:20).

Nothing that I have written here is better than the truth; that is not possible. It is impossible that anything should be “too good to be true.” We may very properly say that a thing is “too bad to be true,” as, for instance, the doctrine of “endless torment;” but no finite being is able to conceive or imagine a thing “too good to be true” – to do that would be equivalent to thinking of something better than God. If I have erred at all in the foregoing (and it would be very remarkable if I had not) I have erred in not seeing all of the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, of the love of God, and so have made His works and ways less grand, and less glorious, and less loving than they really are. I have by no means exhausted the subject.

A SIMPLE SUMMARY

In closing, I would like to leave the reader with a summary of the subject in as compact a form as possible.

1. The work of Christ was *not* to satisfy God’s Justice, *but to reveal His Love.*
2. The justice of God is *not* against the sinner, demanding his condemnation, *but for him, ensuring his salvation.*
3. God is *not* in contrast with, much less in opposition to Christ in His work, *but in perfect harmony and accord.*

4. Christ’s was *not* an exclusive work in order to reconcile God to the world, *but it is the work of “God in Christ” to reconcile the world to Himself.*
5. Christ does *not* have to plead with God in order to make Him willing to reconcile sinners; *but instead, God, by His servants, implores the sinner to be reconciled.*
6. Hence reconciliation is *not* to propitiate God, but man; *not* to make God favorably disposed toward man, *but to make His already existing favor known to man.*
7. Christ did *not* die as our substitute, *but as our companion and associate; not* instead of man, *but with him and for him.*
8. Christ did *not* die to save us from the penalty of sin, *but from sin itself.*
9. Christ did *not* die that we might not die, *but to deliver us out of a death in which we were already involved.*
10. The sinner is *not* redeemed because he repents, *but he is called on to repent because he has been redeemed.*
11. The work of Christ is *not* the cause of God’s love to man, giving rise to that love, *but the effect, flowing out of that love.*
12. The final outcome of Christ’s work of redemption is *not* a partial success, *but a perfect, absolute, and universal triumph!*

CHRISTIANITY TEACHES THE OPPOSITE OF THE TRUTH

In every one of these particulars, the popular theology is just the opposite of the truth. I do not say that the creeds and standards formally enunciate all of these errors (although even this is true of some of them), but I do say that the language of the creeds and standards inevitably lead to these errors, and the popular utterances on the subject implant and confirm them, so that practically they are the belief of the vast majority of Christians.

It must be apparent to every thoughtful mind that these errors are not small and unimportant, slightly differing from the truth, but that they are just the *opposite* of the truth.

