

ATONEMENT

THE SUBSTANCE OF TWO LETTERS

WRITTEN TO A FRIEND.

BY BARTON W. STONE

GO THROUGH, GO THROUGH THE GATES; PREPARE FOR THE
WAY OF THE PEOPLE; CAST UP, CAST UP THE HIGH WAY,
GATHER OUT OF THE STONES; LIFT UP A STANDARD
FOR THE PEOPLE.

ISAIAH.

LEXINGTON: (K)

PRINTED BY JOSEPH CHARLESS MAIN STREET.

1805.

Modernized, 1997, 2013

THE following letters are published at the request of many. Many arguments have been, and, no doubt, will yet be, offered against the sentiments. The most weighty of them I have noticed; but the most common are unworthy of notice, being nothing but retooled, refined stuff of human invention--bold unscriptural assertions, hard names, delusion, error, doctrine of devils, Arminianism, Socinianism, Deism, etc. etc. Such arguments as these have no effect on a candid mind; but they powerfully influence dupes and bigots. The candid look for truth, and plain, unequivocal arguments drawn fairly from the Bible. May God direct us into all truth.

The First Letter

Dear Brother,

I NOW sit down to comply with your request. You have heard that I have other views of religion, different from what I formerly had. You have heard the truth. You request me to state my present sentiments in as plain and unequivocal a manner as possible. I will endeavor to do it. But lest your mind should be bewildered in the labyrinth of Calvinism, where I have been myself, I will first hand you a clue, by which you may escape to the green pastures of gospel liberty.

A brief view of the peculiar doctrines of the Confession of faith, being the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America.

1. God entered into a covenant with Adam, by which he bound him and all his posterity to personal, entire, exact and perpetual obedience; promised life upon the fulfilling, and threatened death upon the breach of it. This covenant was the moral law. Conf. (Chapter 7, Section 2. Chapter 19, Section 1, 2. Large Catechism Q. 20).

2. Adam broke the covenant, and he and his posterity were bound over to the wrath of God, and curse of the law, made subject to death, with all miseries, temporal, spiritual and eternal. (Chapter 6, Section 6).

Christ Jesus, the second person of the adorable Trinity, becomes their surety. (Large Catechism Q. 71. Chapter 8, Section 3).

Christ as surety of man fulfilled the precept of the law, and suffered the curse or penalty of it in their room and stead. (Large Catechism Q. 97) "By this obedience and death of Christ, he made a proper, real and full satisfaction to God's Justice in behalf of them that are justified." (Large Catechism Q. 71. Chapter 11, Section 3). By his obedience and death, Christ did fully discharge the debt of all those that are justified. (Chapter 11, Section 3) "By his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself, he hath purchased reconciliation and

procured the favor of God." (Chapter 8, Section 5. Large Catechism Q. 38) "By this obedience and death of Christ, the sinner is justified, accepted and accounted righteous in the light of God for salvation, his obedience and satisfaction, being imputed to him." (Chapter 11, Section 1. Large Catechism 72).

But if Christ was surety of all men in this sense, then all must be saved. To remove this difficulty it is affirmed that Christ was surety for a part of mankind only, which were the elect given to him from eternity; for these only he lived and died; for these only he paid the debt of obedience and suffering; for these only he reconciled God and procured his favor; and these only are effectually called and saved. (Chapter 3, *passim*, etc.).

Though a part of mankind were reprobated, and ordained to dishonor and wrath from eternity--though Christ is not their surety--though he did not live or die for them--though he never paid their debt of obedience or suffering--though he never reconciled God to them, or procured his favor--though there is no possible salvation or redemption for them: yet the glad tidings of salvation, pardon and eternal life, are to be preached to them as well as the elect--they are to be called and entreated to come to God for pardon and redemption--all the blessings of the New Testament are to be offered to them in the sincerity of God--they are required to believe and be saved. (Chapter 7, Section 3; Chapter 3, Section 6; Chapter 10, Section 4. Large Catechism Q. 83, etc.).

But lest some of the non-elect should take encouragement and believe, it is affirmed that none can believe till wrought upon, and enabled by the spirit. The non-elect, for not believing and for rejecting the offered grace shall be damned. (Chapter 14, Section 1, etc.).

Let us candidly and seriously examine the system.

1. Of the Covenant Made with Adam and His Posterity in Him.

I can find no mention of such a covenant in the Bible. Had there been one text to support it, certainly the general assemblies, synods and

associations of Europe and America, would by this time have found it. As it is an assertion without proof, I leave it for systematics. All the use I make of it, is to wonder at the credulity of the world for receiving that as a fundamental truth, which has no foundation in Scripture.

2. Of the Wrath of God.

If wrath be in God, it must be a perfection of his nature; for nothing imperfect can be attributed to him.--If it be a perfection, it must be eternal, infinite and unchangeable; for if not infinite, it may be increased or diminished, therefore subject to change; if not eternal, it began to be, therefore God lacked a perfection before it did begin; if not unchangeable, it cannot be in God, for the Scriptures everywhere ascribe unchangeability to him.

If wrath be in God, then there are two infinite, eternal and unchangeable principles in him, contrary to one another, love and wrath.

If wrath be in him, then no creature on whom it falls can be saved, except God change.

If wrath be in him, and believers be renewed after his image and partake of his nature, why is it that they feel wrath dying in them as they grow in grace?

If wrath be in him, and a perfection of his nature, why does he enjoin it upon us *to be perfect even as he is perfect*, and yet command us to give no place to wrath? For these and similar reasons, I am convinced that real wrath cannot exist in God.

Objection. The Scriptures everywhere attribute wrath to God.

Answer. The Scriptures attribute many things to God, which are not really in him, but relatively only. He is said *to repent, to be grieved at the heart, to be furious*: "And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." (**Genesis 6:6**) "It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king, for he is turned back from following me." (**1 Samuel 15:11**; also, **Exodus 32:14**; **Judges**

2:18; 2 Samuel 24:16; Joel 2:23; Jeremiah 6:11; Hosea 11:8; Hebrews 3:10, 11) "Yet the Lord is not a man that he should lie or repent." (**1 Samuel 15:29**) "Fury is not in me." (**Isaiah 27:4**). We are therefore to understand the wrath of God to be nothing else but his holy nature standing in opposition to sin. Thus the unbelieving sinner is condemned, and the wrath of God abideth on him (**John 3:18, 36**), because his nature is unholy, and contrary to the holy nature and law of God; and he must eternally remain in this situation, while he remains a sinner. But when he becomes holy, he ceases to be the object of condemnation and wrath; "for there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made them free from the law of sin and death." (**Romans 8:1, 2**). Why is there no condemnation? Because they are in Christ Jesus, as the branch is in the vine, and the wild olive in the stock of the tame. (**John 15; Romans 11**). As the branch of the wild olive, when engrafted, partakes of the nature, spirit or law of the tame; so they, who are engrafted into Christ by faith, partake of the nature and spirit of Christ, which is righteousness, holiness or love. As soon, therefore, as they have this nature, they have the nature of God; hence they are no longer condemned: his wrath, or opposition, ceases towards them; or rather, their wrath or opposition to the nature of God ceases, and there is an union of natures: consequently they are free from the law of sin and death. The change has then taken place in *their* nature, not in God's. The law of the wild olive prevented it from yielding oil; but when it was engrafted into the tame, then the law of the tame olive destroyed the law of the wild, by communicating its own. Hence an union of natures took place: for those in Christ Jesus; they are partakers of his nature and therefore have an union of nature with God. There is therefore now no condemnation to them. Neither the nature of God, nor his holy law, can condemn them; for if they did, then would God condemn his own nature.--Their own conscience does not condemn them; for the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made them free from the law of sin and death, and they walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.

3. Of Christ, a Surety of the Elect, or of Mankind.

In support of this doctrine I can find nothing in the Bible. Once, and but once, is he called a surety--"By so much was Jesus made the

surety of a better testament." (**Hebrews 7:22**). Here he is declared to be a surety of the *new* or *better testament*, and not of *the elect*. By this must be understood that he gave assurance or certainty, that the promises of this covenant or testament are faithful and true, and that they shall be fulfilled to all believers, or made "sure to all the seed." To the truth of this Daniel testifies: "And he [Christ] shall confirm the covenant with many." (**Daniel 9:27**). Paul testifies the same. "Now I say that Jesus Christ was the minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." (**Romans 15:8**) "And this I say that the covenant that was confirmed of God in Christ, the law which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." (**Galatians 3:17**).

In reference to the same thing, Jesus is often called a witness. "Behold I have given him for a witness to the people" (Isaiah 55:4); and the preceding verse shows for what purpose his testimony was designed, that is, to make sure the mercies or promises of the everlasting covenant. He is called the faithful and true witness. (**Revelation 1:5**, and **3:14**). Jesus said to Pilate, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." (**John 18:37**). Hence the New Testament is so frequently called the "testimony of Jesus," because he testified the truth and promises of God, and confirmed them by all the miracles wrought in his life, death and resurrection.

Although the doctrine of Christ's suretyship for the elect, has no foundation in Scripture, yet it is the principal foundation-stone of a very popular system. This is the nail which is thought to be fastened in a sure place. On it hang election, partial redemption, justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ the surety; the atonement, faith, the operations of the Spirit, etc. as explained by Calvinists. If this nail be drawn, these doctrines fall of course.

4. Of Imputed Righteousness.

You are told that Christ, as surety for the elect, paid their debt of obedience and suffering, and so satisfied law and justice in their room and stead. What was the law which Christ is said to have satisfied in their stead?--It is this, "Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy

heart, soul, mind and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself: on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (**Matthew 22:37-40**). Now did Christ love God and his neighbor in the room and stead of the elect? Or did he pay this debt of obedience to law in their room and stead? If so, he has freed them from the obligation of loving God or to their neighbor; for what our surety pays *for us*, is considered as paid *by us*. Hence it will follow that "Christ is become the minister of sin," and "Faith has made void the law."

How is it possible for Christ, either as God or man, to have fulfilled this law for sinners? As God, he must love himself infinitely; and as man, he must love God with all his heart, and his neighbor as himself. These are certainly maxims in divinity. If so, what surplus righteousness is left to be imputed to another?

To evade the force of the above reasoning, some say that Christ was above the law, and therefore his obedience is *meritorious*.¹ Strange doctrine indeed! that Christ should be above loving himself or his neighbor. To say he was above law is an assertion void of proof; especially when it is positively declared that "he was made under the law." (**Galatians 4:4**).

Objection. By one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. (**Romans 5:19**). Hence it is concluded that the obedience or righteousness of Christ is imputed to us. (See also **2 Corinthians 5:21**).

Answer. There is no mention of the imputation of righteousness or unrighteousness here. We know that by Adam's disobedience many were made sinners. How? Not by imputation, but in reality. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." (**Job 14:4**) "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh."² (**John 3:6**). So by the obedience of Christ many were made righteous.-- How? Not by imputation, but really, as I shall presently show in answering the following objection.

Objection. He is the Lord our righteousness. (**Jeremiah 23:6**). And he is of God made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and

¹ *Merit, meritorious*, are phrases not used in Scripture. They are connected with works of supererogation.

² See Large Catechism Q. 26

redemption. (**1 Corinthians 1:30**). Therefore his righteousness is imputed.

Answer. If this be a just conclusion from the text, then we must also conclude that wisdom, sanctification and redemption are imputed; for he was made one as much as another. Though the most rigid would blush to own this, yet on every occasion they press this text in support of the imputed righteousness of Christ. How is Christ made unto us wisdom? By teaching us. How is he made unto us sanctification? By making us holy. How is he made unto us redemption? By redeeming us from sin and death. How is he made unto us righteousness? By making us righteous; for, as I have already shown, the branch engrafted partakes of the nature of the vine; so they, who are in Christ Jesus, are partakers of his divine nature, which is righteousness. This is called "the righteousness of God," "the righteousness of faith," "the righteousness which is of God by faith of Jesus Christ," etc. (**Romans 3:21; 9:30; 10:3, 10; Philippians 3:9; 2 Corinthians 5:21**).

Objection. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. (**Romans 10:4**).

Answer. "The end of the commandment," says an apostle, "is charity out of a pure heart." (**1 Timothy 1:5**). This end of the law, that is, charity or love to God and man, we get, not by imputation, but by faith in Jesus Christ, as shown before. Therefore he is the end of the law, and answers it completely to all believers; for "the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us [not for us] who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit." (**Romans 8:4**).

But it is asserted that Christ, as surety of the elect, or of mankind, not only paid their debt of obedience, and so satisfied law; but also paid their debt of suffering, which was the penalty of the law, and so satisfied justice. These sufferings, (or this curse of the law) were miseries of death, temporal, spiritual, and eternal. Did he suffer temporal misery or death in the room and stead of sinners, and thereby satisfy justice? If so, why have Christians in every age suffered them again? Why do Christians yet suffer them? Surely, if justice received payment, and "a proper, real, and full satisfaction by the death or sacrifice of Christ"; if the debt was fully discharged, then Christians are free; justice cannot demand the debt to be paid the

second time. Did he suffer spiritual death in their room and stead? Spiritual death, as the fathers explain it, is the want to original righteousness and the favor of God; it is enmity to God and opposition to his law; in a word, it is the want of spiritual life. It was impossible for Christ to have suffered this, without being a complete sinner in heart and life. But "he was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners." (**Hebrews 7:26**). Did he suffer eternal death or misery in their room and stead? This was impossible; for he could not be held in death, but arose, and "now liveth forevermore." (**Revelation 1:18**). Some to patch up the tattered system, say he did not suffer eternal death or misery, but he suffered an infinite death, which was equivalent to eternal. This they insist is reasonable, but it is unscriptural. The foundation of a system of religion, ought to be the plain testimony of God, and not assertions void of proof.

What then was the debt of suffering which Christ paid for us? The Scripture is silent. It never mentions a word of satisfying law or justice, or paying debts of obedience or suffering for us. But if it be truth, that Christ, as surety for the elect, did pay their debt of obedience and suffering, and so satisfied law and justice in their room and stead, then the consequences below must follow.

Consequences of Surety-Righteousness.

1. This doctrine destroys the idea of grace and forgiveness. For according to this, God will not forgive the sinner, till he or his surety has perfectly obeyed the law, and suffered the penalty, which justice demanded. When these debts are paid, fully paid, then he forgives. But is there any grace in this act of forgiveness? Or is it forgiveness at all? If I am debt, and unable to pay, and my surety pays the debt, is it grace in my creditors to forgive me? God is proposed to us as the example of forgiveness. "Forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you." (**Ephesians 4:32**). Or more literally: Forgiving one another even as God in Christ, (Greek, *en christo*) hath forgiven you. Why our translators rendered this phrase *en christo* "for Christ's sake," in this place only, when everywhere else they give the literal translation, I pretend not to say.

If God forgives not till our debts are paid by us or by our surety, and he is proposed as our example; then we must never forgive our

debtors, till they or their surety, have paid us their debts. Suppose I owe B a hundred pounds, and have not a penny to pay, nor the most distant prospect of ever getting a penny. B cannot forgive me, because he must forgive "even as God forgives," that is, when the debt is paid. C becomes my surety and pays B the full sum. Now B *graciously forgives me*. But I am now in debt to C, my surety, who, for the same reason, cannot *forgive me*. D becomes my surety, and pays C. Now C "forgives me"; but I am still indebted to D, who cannot forgive me, for the same reason, till he is paid. I am lawfully and justly indebted to him, and law and justice must be satisfied, or else he cannot *forgive even as God does*. On this principle it is easy to see, that there is not forgiveness in the universe.

But it is said, The grace of God in forgiving us appears in this, because he gave Christ to make satisfaction to law and justice for us. Suppose B, to whom I am indebted an hundred pounds, should say, "I cannot forgive you till law and justice be satisfied"; but in the meantime should go to his coffer and take out the full sum, and hand it to me or my surety to pay him. Might he not as well have forgiven me at first. The inference is easy.

If it were contrary to law and justice for God to forgive me, till my debts were paid, then it must be contrary to law and justice for Christ my surety to forgive me; for this would be to give up his justice and act contrary to the Father.

The Lord teaches us to pray, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debts." (**Matthew 6:12**). But how and when are we to forgive our debtors, or those that trespass against us? Our Lord answers: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him, and if he repent, forgive him. (**Luke 17:3, 4**). In forgiving thus, we forgive "even as God in Christ forgives." Therefore we conclude that God forgives freely and graciously. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king who would take an account of his servants; one was brought who owed him ten thousand talents; forasmuch as he had not to pay, and because he desired the king to forgive him, the king forgave him all the debt." (Matthew 18:23). Here observe, it was a just debt; law and justice demanded payment; yet it was not contrary to law or justice for the king to forgive, without a surety paying the debt. So is the kingdom of heaven. Again: "There were two debtors; the one owed five

hundred pence, and the other fifty; and whereas they had nothing to pay, the creditor frankly forgave them." (Luke 7:41, 42). No surety is mentioned as having paid the debt.

But whom does God forgive?

Answer: Believers. "Whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." (**Acts 10:43**). Penitents. "Repent, for the remission of sins." (**Acts 2:38**).

For whose sake does he forgive? Or on what grounds?

Answer: For his own name's sake; for his compassion; for his mercy's sake; for the riches of his grace. (**Psalm 25:11; 79:9; 78:11; 106:8; Titus 3:5; Ephesians 1:7; Isaiah 43:25**).

2. Another consequence of the doctrine of surety-righteousness, as stated before, is, that it confirms two contrary doctrines, which are equally false, viz. universal salvation and universal damnation. That Christ "died for all," tasted death for every man, was a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, is a proposition as plainly demonstrated from Scripture as any other. (See **2 Corinthians 5:14, 15; 1 Timothy 2:6; Hebrews 2:9; John 1:29; 2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 2:2; John 3:17; 12:47; 1 Timothy 4:10; 1 John 4:14**; etc.). Now as there is not a text in the Bible which says he did not die for all, it follows with certainty that he did die for all. If he died as surety in the way of satisfaction, it undeniably follows that all must be saved. This consequence our fathers saw to be unavoidable, and the only shift they had to evade it, was to deny the fact that he died for all; or to draw a veil over those texts, which held forth this idea. In the honesty of their hearts they did it, no doubt.

But they did not consider another difficulty into which they ran by their attachment to the doctrine of surety-righteousness; which is, that on this principle none can be saved who ever heard the Gospel, unless they have embraced it on their first hearing. For the law, as I have already proved on their own principles, required infinite or eternal death or suffering; and as Christ could not suffer more than infinite or eternal, then all his sufferings only satisfied law or justice, and could do no more.--What then will be done with the sins under the Gospel?

Unbelief, rejecting the call of God, despising his mercy, abusing his grace, trampling underfoot the blood of the covenant, etc. For these sins there can be no forgiveness because there is no satisfaction made for them. Therefore all, who have ever committed one of these sins, must be damned without remedy.

Some saw this difficulty, and have labored to remove it, by saying that Christ died to open the door of mercy to sinners; or to remove the bars out of the way of mercy, that God might have mercy on whom he would have mercy. But when they tell us what these bars are, we find that they are the broken law and offended justice; and the manner in which Christ removed them, was by fulfilling the precept, and suffering the penalty of the law as a surety. This is the same scheme under tinsel. Did Christ die to open the door of mercy in God's breast? No: for mercy flowed from God to sinners in the gift of Christ, and this gift was certainly prior to his death. To talk of bars in God's breast to prevent mercy from flowing to sinners, appears to be highly improper; because God cannot change; and because sinners are the proper objects of mercy. Put them in any other situation than sinners, then you might talk of bars in the way of mercy flowing to them.

3. And another consequence of the doctrine of the surety-righteousness of Christ, is, that it contradicts the simple doctrines of the Gospel. Here I must call back your attention to some of the doctrines of the Confession, as stated before. If Christ be surety or substitute for a part of mankind only; then for this part only did he pay the debt of obedience and suffering, or satisfy law and justice; for this part only did he purchase salvation, or redemption and eternal life; for this part only did he procure the favor of God. Therefore the other part are still in debt to law and justice; for them there is no favor of God procured; for them there is no salvation, redemption or eternal life purchased. Yet the Gospel is to be preached in all the world, to every creature; the glad tidings of salvation, pardon and eternal life are to be preached to those for whom there is no possible salvation, pardon or life. God's good will and favor are to be sincerely declared to those for whom there is no favor procured; forgiveness is to be offered to those, for whom there is no possible forgiveness; all are to be invited to come to God for grace and salvation, when there is no possible way for those for whom Christ is not surety; all are required to believe in Jesus for salvation, when he has none for those for

whom he is not surety. In short, there is not a doctrine of the Gospel, which this doctrine does not contradict.

4. Another consequence of the doctrine is, that it leaves no foundation for faith. For if Christ be surety, and surety for a part of mankind only, it follows that none know for whom he is surety, till they are renewed; and therefore, before they are renewed, they are uncertain whether he is their surety or not; consequently they cannot believe, because they have no real grounds. Hence they, who have adopted this surety plan, are under the necessity of denying that a natural man can believe, until wrought upon by Almighty power, and enabled to do it. But there is no proposition more manifest from the Bible, than that faith precedes justification, salvation, or regeneration, as I shall abundantly prove hereafter.

5. Another consequence of the same doctrine is, that it contradicts the Scripture doctrine of justification. For by this doctrine we are taught, that we are justified, that is, declared just only for the surety-righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone. It is evident that they, who are acquainted with the Bible, and not blindly attached to the sentiment, can find no foundation in truth for this doctrine. In **Romans 3:20**, we are told what that righteousness is by which we are justified, "even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ." (**Philippians 3:9**) "Not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God through faith. "The Gentiles who followed not after righteousness, have attained unto righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith." (**Romans 9:30**) "For they [the Jews] being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God, etc." (**Romans 10:3-10**). The Apostle had before proved (**Romans 3**) that all mankind were under sin, guilty and condemned. In verse 20, he proves that by the deeds of the law, no flesh can be justified in the sight of God; "for by the law is the knowledge of sin." If then by the law, or by our own righteousness which is of the law, we cannot be justified, how, or by what righteousness are we justified? He answers, "by the righteousness of God." But how do we get this righteousness? By faith. Hence it is called "the righteousness of faith; the righteousness which is by or through faith." How do we get the righteousness of

God by or through faith? Because by faith we are engrafted into, or in Christ; and by this union with him we become partakers of his nature, which is righteousness, or holiness, as I before proved. Therefore we are justified, *made* just and *declared* just, or righteousness by faith, without the deeds of the law. And this is witnessed by the law and the prophets; and Abraham and David are produced as instances, who were justified by faith. (**Romans 4**). Therefore it is, that "there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (**Romans 8:1**). And it is evident, there is no justification to them who are not in Christ Jesus. For I proved before, that the nature and law of God will eternally condemn that which is contrary to them; therefore a person can never be justified till he has the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus Christ. "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified." (**Isaiah 45:25**). They are justified, *made* just or righteous, and *declared* so; because they are so indeed.

6. Another consequence of Christ suffering as surety for the elect is, that it is contrary to justice. Every person, who is not misled by a favorite system, knows that it is unjust for the innocent to suffer in the room and stead of the guilty. No just law can demand, or admit of it. The law of God does not demand it--does not admit of it. The Jews in Babylon complained that "the fathers had eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth were set on edge": that is, that they suffered for the iniquities of their fathers. The Lord answers, "All souls are mine," "the soul that sinneth it shall die," "the son shall not die for the iniquity of the father, nor the father for the iniquity of the son; but every man shall die for his own sin."

If the divine law admitted proxy suffering, and proxy satisfaction, then it admitted of Christ's death, consequently he died according to law. The Jews, therefore, in putting him to death were not guilty of murder: for they only did what the law admitted--nay, what it required; that is, the death of the guilty or his substitute. Consequently the apostles were wrong in charging them with the guilt of a most atrocious crime, and exhorting them to repentance, that they might receive forgiveness. The plain truth is, neither law nor justice required his death; therefore his death was murder of the worst kind.

7. Another consequence arising from the same doctrine is, that it makes God changeable. For we are told that Christ "purchased reconciliation, and procured the favor of God." Hence we must conclude, that God was an adversary or enemy before, but afterwards changed and become friendly and favorable. "But God is of one mind, and who can turn him?" (**Job 23:13**) "With whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (**James 1:17**).

8. From this doctrine another consequence naturally arises: It conveys to our minds the notion of two distinct independent Gods at least: for it is evident that the "one only true God" cannot purchase any thing from himself; all things are his originally and he cannot give himself any thing which he had not before. And it is as evident that no created being can purchase anything from God; for every creature belongs to God, and therefore none can give him any thing, which is not his own. Therefore if Christ did purchase from God, he must be a distinct independent God. But "there is none other God but one." (**1 Corinthians 8:4**).

9. Another consequence of the doctrine is, it draws a veil over the love, grace and mercy of God. For a person and his surety are considered one in law. Whatever the surety does or suffers in the stead of the person for whom he is surety, is considered as done and suffered by the person himself. In the sufferings of Jesus, they for whom he is surety, see themselves suffering eternally, or infinitely, the wrath and vengeance of God, which is all that justice or vengeance could inflict. How then can they ascribe glory to the grace and love of God for their redemption? Is it of grace or of debt? They may, indeed extol the grace and love of Jesus, the surety, but what can they ascribe to the Father more than strict, inflexible justice?

10. The last consequence of the doctrine, which I shall mention is, That it lulls to supineness and slothfulness in religion. The formalist, though he has no sense of love to God and living religion; though stupid, dead and carnal; though he seldom thinks of God, and is sunk in the spirit of the world--Yet hopes in the righteousness of Christ the surety, and thinks this will supply the want of righteousness in heart; this will cover his filthy, polluted soul; this will make him acceptable in the sight of God. If his conscience or heart condemns him, he appeases its clamor, with this balmy doctrine. But O that all would

consider, "WITHOUT HOLINESS NO MAN SHALL SEE THE LORD."
(Hebrews 12:14).

Thus I have endeavored to remove some of the stumbling stones out of the way of the Lord; the way of truth. To you I submit the arguments. Be not terrified with any amazement, if anything I have said appears strange. I hope to convince you in my next letter that we are not mad; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. May God direct us into all truth!

Yours in the bonds of the gospel.
B. W. S.

The Second Letter

Dear Brother,

You say that my last letter has thrown your mind into a dreadful state of confusion. You are convinced that Calvinism has no foundation in truth: Now you ask the question, "What is truth? For what purpose did Jesus come into the world, live and die?" I shall in this letter endeavor to relieve your mind; and to do it more effectually I shall inquire into three particulars.

1. THE NATURE OF GOD
2. THE NATURE OF FALLEN MAN.
3. THE DESIGN OF CHRIST'S COMING AND DYING.

1. I inquire into the nature of God.

That God is an uncompounded, eternal, infinite and unchangeable being, no Christian will deny in positive terms; yet this plain, fundamental doctrine has been so darkened by human inventions, that the minds of many have been warped from the simplicity of it. To define a *person*, as the fathers have done, to be "complete intelligent and individual subsistence, which is neither a part of, nor sustained by any other"; and to say that three such persons or subsistences are in the Godhead, is undoubtedly contrary to Scripture, and perfectly unintelligible. But there is but one God, though revealed under different names or relations to his creatures.

The nature of God, as testified by John, is love. "God is love." (**1 John 4:8, 16**). Nothing but love can bind the universe together; therefore God, the life, the spring of all, must be love. Wrath, the opposite of love, is that which disunites; therefore, as I proved before, it cannot *really* exist in God. There can be nothing in God contrary to love, else he would be divided. If God's nature be love, then he must be just, faithful, true, merciful, etc. For as well observed by President Davies in his discourse on love, there are but modifications, or emanations of the love of God. This is evident from Christian experience. They are partakers of the divine nature, which is love; this nature in them makes them just, faithful, true, merciful, kind, etc. See **1 Corinthians 13**, on the nature and effects of charity or love.

That God is love, and this love fixed on the race of Adam, is evident from the express declarations of Scripture (see **John 3:16**, "God so loved the world," etc.) from the manifestation of it in Christ; "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." (**2 Corinthians 5:19**) "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." (**John 1:18**) "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." (**John 14:9**) "God was manifest in the flesh." (**1 Timothy 3:16**) "In him [that is, Jesus] dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." (**Colossians 2:9**). If we would see what God is, we are to view him in Christ. And what but love do we find in the life and death--in the names and offices of the friend of sinners?

"The Lord is a sun." (**Psalms 84:11**). The sun shines, not to show himself, but to give light, life and happiness to creation. So the love of God flows in eternal, unchangeable streams upon all creation, to give light, life and happiness to all. Though the sun shines invariably the same, yet the blind are incapacitated for receiving his light; yet those in a deep dungeon are incapacitated for receiving his influence or deriving any comfort from him. So of the love of God. While Lucifer and his angels remained in a holy state, they received light, life, glory and happiness from the ever-beaming streams of infinite love. But when they sinned, fear, torment, condemnation and wrath took place in their breasts, and prevented the influence of God's love. Though the love of God flows eternally and unchangeably the same, yet the fallen angels are perfectly incapacitated by sin, to receive any happiness from it; they remain eternally under condemnation, fear, torment and wrath.

Our first parents, too, while in innocence, enjoyed the unceasing streams of love. But sin filled them with fear, torment, condemnation and wrath. These would have eternally incapacitated them for receiving any influence of eternal love. But Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil, and thus to prepare our hearts for receiving again the happiness and comfort of God's eternal love.

"O the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of God which passeth knowledge!"

2. I now inquire into the nature of man.

This part of the subject I have already hinted at in several places. It is evident from Scripture that all the world is by nature in a state of condemnation, fear, wrath and torment, by reason of sin. As "love casts out fear" (**1 John 4:18**), so does fear cast out love. But "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him." (**1 John 4:16**). Consequently they who dwell not in love, are not in God, nor God in them: Or as it is said in another place, they "are without God in the world." (**Ephesians 2:12**). As the soul was made to enjoy God and as nothing but God can fill or satisfy it, hence the busy pursuits of the world after something to fill their emptiness, to satisfy their wants, and give them happiness. Hence it is that they run "into all excess of riot" and wickedness, worshiping and serving the creature more than the Creator. Mankind being without God, we see the reason why they are represented as hungry, thirsty, blind, dead, etc. In a word "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (**Romans 3:23**).

3. For what purpose did Christ come into the world, live and die?

As this is a matter of the last importance, I shall be more particular in the enquiry.

(1). Christ came into the world, lived and died, as "Mediator between God and man," to make an *Atonement*. "And not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." (**Romans 5:11**). The word *atone* is compounded of the two little words *at* and *one*. (See Johnston's and Bailey's dictionary). The word *atonement* signifies *to make one*; the termination, *ment*, being evidently Gallic, which signifies *to make*, or *the action of making or doing*.

From what was observed of the nature of God and man, it is plain that they are *at twos*, that is, their natures are perfectly opposed one to the other. God is holy, just and good; man is unholy, unjust and wicked. Christ came as Mediator between them, in order to *at one* them, or make them *one*. This *atonement* is effected when man is made holy,

just and good, even as God is; then, and not till then, can there be a union between them. Here we may observe that *atonement* (Greek, *katallage*) implies a change; but God is infinitely perfect, and cannot change; the change must therefore take place in man. Hence it is plain that *atonement* differs not from regeneration. This idea is confirmed from the meaning of the word *atonement* under the law. There it is explained to signify purging and cleansing, most generally, if not always. "And he shall go out unto the altar that is before the Lord, and make an atonement for it; and shall take of the blood of the bullock, and of the blood of the goat, and put it upon the horns of the altar round about. And he that sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel." (**Leviticus 16:18**). In the same manner an atonement was made for a leprous house to cleanse it. (**Leviticus 14:53**). Again, "And the priest shall offer the burnt offering--and make an atonement for him, and he shall be clean." (**Leviticus 14:20**). In short, "almost all things are by the law purged with blood--the book, the people, the tabernacle, the vessels of the ministry," etc. (**Hebrews 9:12-22; Numbers 8:21; 1 Samuel 3:14**, etc.)

(2). Christ came into the world, lived and died to make reconciliation. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." (**2 Corinthians 5:18, 19; Romans 5:10; Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 1:20**). God in Christ was not reconciling himself to the world, but the world unto himself. This is plain from those texts to which I have just referred. Besides, if Christ came to reconcile God to man, then a change must have taken place in the mind of God, which is impossible.

A hint to the learned. The word (*katallage*) rendered "atonement" in our translation, is everywhere else in the New Testament rendered "reconciliation." (See **Romans 5:10, 11; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 1:20, 21**, etc.). In the laws of Moses also atonement and reconciliation are synonymous. (**Leviticus 16:18**). Here Aaron was commanded to make an atonement for the altar. When this command was executed, he is then said to have made an end of "reconciling" the holy place. (**Leviticus 16:20**. Compare **Leviticus 6:30; 8:15; 2 Chron. 29:24; Ezek. 45:15; Daniel 9:24**, etc.). From these observations it is plain, both from the law and the testimony, that reconciliation and atonement are the same thing; and

that the change of temper does not take place in God's mind, but in the mind of the sinner.

(3). Christ came to be a propitiation. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood. (**Romans 3:25**). To propitiate signifies *to appease*. From the text it is plain that propitiation takes place through faith in the blood of Christ. This cannot be applied to God; for he is unchangeable, he cannot be appeased, because he never had wrath in him, as before proved. Besides we cannot think that God is propitiated through faith in the blood of Christ; because we never read of him acting faith in his blood, or being influenced by it. Therefore we must conclude that we receive the propitiation, or are propitiated to God through faith in the blood of Christ.

From this view of propitiation we see that it does not differ from atonement, reconciliation or regeneration. "Wherefore it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." (**Hebrews 2:17**). The word (Greek, *hilaskesthai*) translated in this verse "reconciliation" is everywhere else in the New Testament translated "propitiation."³ (**Romans 3:25; 1 John 2:2; 4:10**).

(4). Christ came "to save sinners." (**1 Timothy 1:15**, etc.). This salvation consists principally in being saved from sin. "His name shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." (**Matthew 1:21**). To be saved from sin is the same as to be reconciled, atoned or propitiated unto God.

(5). Christ came into the world, lived and died "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us. "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." (**Romans 8:3, 4**). Now the righteousness of the law is love to God and man, or holiness, justice,

³ D. Doddridge translates the same word, "atonement" (*in loco*).

and goodness. This is the same thing as salvation from sin, atonement, reconciliation or propitiation.

(6). Christ came to redeem, purchase, buy and ransom us. "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." (**Revelation 5:9**, etc.) "Feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood." (**Acts 20:28**) "Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God," etc. (**1 Corinthians 6:20**) "Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." (**1 Timothy 2:6; Matthew 20:28**). That, "redeeming," "purchasing," "buying" and "ransoming" are tantamount expressions, I suppose will be disputed by none; especially by the learned; who, by turning over their Greek Testament, will easily see that the same word is sometimes translated "redeemed," sometimes, "bought," etc. (Compare **Titus 2:14; Luke 2:38; Hebrews 9:12**, with **Matthew 20:28**). Here we see that "redemption" and "ransom" are the same (Greek, *lutron*). Compare **Revelation 5:9; 14:4**, with **1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23**, and you will plainly see that "redeeming" and "buying" are the same (Greek, *egorao*).

In order to set this part of the subject in the clearest point of light, I shall enquire into three particulars: from whom, or from what did Christ redeem, buy, purchase or ransom us?--for whom did he redeem us?--and what was the price given?

From whom or from what did Christ redeem, etc.?

I answer, *First*. From the devil. For he is the prince, the ruler and god of this world; and mankind are under his power, ensnared by him, and led captive at his will. "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out." (**John 12:31**) "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me." (**John 14:30**) "Because the prince of this world is judged." (**John 16:11**) "The God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not." (**2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2**). That mankind are ensnared and led captive by him is evident. "And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." (**2 Timothy 2:26**). When Christ had finished the work of redemption, "he ascended up on high, and led captivity captive." (**Ephesians 4:8; Psalm 68:18**). They who were in captivity to the devil are now captivated by Jesus, by his love, and led captive to glory. That mankind are under the power of the devil is

plain from the texts just quoted; to which add Acts 26:18 ("To turn them from the power of Satan unto God") and Luke 11:21, 22 ("When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his good are in peace; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour, wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils"). From these passages of Scripture, and many others of the same nature, it is very plain that Christ came to redeem us from the devil.

Second. He came also to redeem us from sin, which is the same as to redeem us from the devil. "Who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity." (**Titus 2:14; Psalm 130:8**) "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ." (**1 Peter 1:18**). Mankind is represented as "sold under sin, serving sin," "servants to sin," "under the dominion and reign of sign," etc. (**Romans 7:14; 5:21; 6:14, 17, 19, 20**). Hence it is plain that Christ redeems us from sin or from all iniquity.

Third. He redeems from the curse of the law. "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." (**Galatians 3:13**) (See answer to Objection 9).

Hence it is evident that Christ redeems from the devil, sin, and the curse of the law. But for whom did Christ redeem us? I answer--for God. "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." (**Revelation 5:9; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20**). If Christ redeemed us *to* or *for* God, he did not redeem us *from* God. Besides God himself in Christ is the redeemer of sinners: "Thus saith the LORD, the king of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts, I am the first, and I am the last, and besides me there is no God." Isaiah 44:6. Hence it is undeniable, that the LORD or Jehovah, the first and the last, the only God is the Redeemer. (See also **Isaiah 44:24; 47:4; 54:5; 60:16**). In the same manner, God in Christ is the Savior. "I, even I, am the LORD, and beside me there is no Savior." (**Isaiah 43:11, 3; Hosea 13:4; also Isaiah 49:26; 60:16; 43:15**). If God is the *only* Redeemer and the *only* Savior, then it follows

undeniably that God did not redeem or save us from himself, but from *our enemies*. (**Psalm 136:24**).

Some affirm that Christ redeemed us from the hands of justice. This is the same thing as to be redeemed out of the hands of a just God; for justice is an attribute of his nature. Now can any Christian understanding the truth, wish to be delivered out of the hands of justice?--impossible. The justice of God has been so long misunderstood, that the minds of sinners are filled with a slavish dread of approaching to God. Justice, as before shown, is love acting justly.

I now inquire what was the price given for our redemption? The blood or death of Christ is everywhere in Scripture, declared to be the price given. "Feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood." (**Acts 20:28**) "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." (**Revelation 5:9**) "In whom we have redemption through his blood." (**Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; 1 Peter 1:18, 19**, etc.).

It may now be asked if Christ, or God in Christ, redeems from the devil and sin, and if he gave his blood as the ransom or price. Who got the price? The apostle to the Hebrews answers: "Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil." (**Hebrews 2:14**). Here we see that the devil had the power of death, and he got the price, which was the death of Christ. But his joy was short, for this very price was his ruin; the ruin of his kingdom and reign on earth. Then was fulfilled in that old prophecy: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shall bruise his heel." (**Genesis 3:15**).

Thus have I shown some of the express purposes for which Christ came into the world, lived and died--to atone, to reconcile, to propitiate, to save, to fulfill the righteousness of the law in us, and redeem, buy, purchase, or ransom us. I might mention others, as that "he came to destroy the works of the devil, to condemn sin in the flesh," "purge out sins," etc. (**1 John 3:5, 8; Romans 8:4; Hebrews 1:3**). But these are the same as those before mentioned expressed in other words. It is strange, very strange, that though the purposes, for

which Christ came into the world are so clearly and plainly expressed, yet our fathers seemed to have been partially blind to them, under the notion that Christ came to satisfy law and justice. Though there is not a text in the Bible, that expresses satisfaction to law or justice, as shown before, yet it is generally, but groundlessly, asserted that this was the grand purpose of his coming into the world.

But it may be asked, How does the blood of Christ redeem, atone, reconcile, propitiate and save us? I answer. The gift of Christ, his life, and especially his death were displays of God--his love, grace and mercy to a lost world. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." (**John 3:16**). Here the love of God is displayed in the gift of Christ. Through the whole life of Jesus the same love is displayed; every word and action was marked with love; by which *he plainly showed the Father*. For says he, "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father"; because the Father was in him. "The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me he doth the works." (**John 14:9, 10**). But in the death of Jesus the love of God was displayed in the greatest and most astonishing degree: "But God commendeth his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." (**Romans 5:8**). For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." (**2 Corinthians 5:14**). Here the love of Christ is displayed in his dying for all. Again, it is said "That he, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man." (**Hebrews 2:9**). He did not die to purchase grace, or favor, but his death was the manifestation, or display of it. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins." (**1 John 4:10**). God's sending his son to be a propitiation, was love, that is, the greatest possible display of it.

This appears to be the general tenor of Scripture. (**1 John 3:16; 4:9**, etc. etc.). Therefore I conclude that the gift, life and especially the death of Jesus were designed *to show us plainly of the Father*; to display his glory, his love, grace and mercy to sinners; and to condemn and destroy sin.

Now I proceed to show how the death or blood of Jesus answers the purposes for which he came into the world. "I," said Jesus, "if I be

lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said signifying what death he should die." (**John 12:32, 33**). With what cords does he draw men unto him? with the cords of love. (**Hosea 11:4**) "I drew them with the bands of a man, with the cords of love." (**Jeremiah 31:3**) "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee."

Now, "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." (**John 3:14, 15**). The sinner that believes in Jesus, and looks to him on the cross, will be propitiated unto God. "For Christ is set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." (**Romans 3:25**). For in his blood we see the love, grace and compassion of God to us displayed, which propitiates or appeases our souls to him.--By faith in the cross of Jesus, the sinner is reconciled to God. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God, by the death of his son." (**Romans 5:10**) "That he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby." (**Ephesians 2:15**) "And (having made peace through the blood of the cross) by him to reconcile all things unto himself. . . . And you that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, in the body of his flesh through death." (**Colossians 1:20-22**). Hence it is plain, that we are reconciled to God by the blood of Jesus; and by his blood the enmity of our hearts is slain. Now as we are propitiated or appeased unto God by faith in the blood of Christ; and as it is proved that propitiation, atonement and reconciliation mean the same thing, therefore, we are reconciled or *atoned* unto God by faith in the blood or death of Christ; or by the blood or death of Jesus is displayed the love, the grace and mercy of God, by which the believing soul is melted down and reconciled.

In this manner we reconcile and melt down our enemies. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink, for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." (**Romans 12:20**). By this loving kindness we shall draw our enemy to us and melt him down. So God *draws us with the bands of a man*, and these bands by which a man is drawn, are *the cords of love*. (**Hosea 11:4**). Such is the constitution of our nature.

Again.--By the blood of Jesus we are brought nigh to God. "But now in Christ, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." (**Ephesians 2:12**). How were they made nigh by the blood of Jesus? because by faith in his blood we see the love of God displayed by which we are drawn nigh unto him.

We are justified by his blood. "Much more being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." (**Romans 5:9**). As it is so often declared that we are justified by faith, and here, that we justified by his blood, we must understand, that we are justified by faith in his blood; that is, made just or righteous even as he is righteous, and then declared so of God, because we are so. For by faith in his blood we see the love, grace, mercy and glory of God, by which we are changed into the same image. "But we all with open [or unveiled] face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (**2 Corinthians 3:18**). This *glory of God* is seen *in the face of Jesus Christ*. (**2 Corinthians 4:6**). In this manner we easily understand **Isaiah 53:11**. "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many," that is, by the knowledge, which Jesus gives of the Father, his love, compassion and glory, we are justified, or made and declared righteous, or changed into the same image from glory to glory.

It is plain that the knowledge of God is the source of life in us. "For this is life eternal to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." (**John 17:3**). Where is this eternal life? In Jesus Christ; "for this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his son." (**1 John 5:11**). If the knowledge of God be the source of eternal life, and this life be in Jesus, therefore the knowledge of God must be in him; he has given us the true knowledge of God in his life and death. This eternal life in Christ Jesus is begotten in us by faith; "he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." (**John 3:36**).

Again.--By the blood of Christ we are redeemed, bought, purchased, and ransomed, as I before proved. This redemption from the devil, sin and the curse of the law, is also effected by faith in his blood. "And they overcame him [the devil] by the blood of the Lamb." (**Revelation 12:11**) "This is the victory that overcometh the world,

even our faith." "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the son of God." (1 John 5:4, 5). If faith in Jesus overcomes the world, then by the same means we overcome the devil; that is, by faith in the blood of the Lamb. For, as frequently observed, the blood of Jesus sets forth or displays the love of God, by which the captivity are led captive; or those in captivity to the devil and sin, are captivated and drawn by the love of God, from the dominion of sin, and from the power of Satan to serve the living God. By the same love they are delivered from the fear and sting of death. (Hebrews 2:15). By the same love of God, displayed in the blood of Jesus, we are led to love God. "We love him because he first loved us." (1 John 4:19). And "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten son into world, that we might live through him." (1 John 4:9).

In this view of the subject how full of glory is that text? "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of earth; for I am God and there is none else." (Isaiah 45:22). All living Christians know by experience that it is the love of God as manifested in Jesus, which reconciles, propitiates and redeems their souls to God; delivers them from fear, and makes them joyful in the God of their salvation.

But after all, there may be difficulties in your mind which I shall attempt to remove.

Objections Answered.

Objection 1. Christ is often said to have "died for us," to have "died for sinners," etc. Hence it is concluded that Christ died as a surety or substitute in their room and stead; and it is farther argued that the preposition "for" (Greek, *uper*) signifies "in the room or stead of."

Answer. I before proved that Christ died "for all" for "every man, for the whole world"; and if he died as a surety or substitute in their room and stead, then all must be saved. But if, when it is said, Christ died "for us," that the word *for* (*uper*) signifies "in the room and stead of"; then it follows that when Christ is said so often to have died "for our sins," the word *for* (*uper*) signifying "in the room and stead of," therefore he died in the room and stead of our sins, that our sins might not die. Such a conclusion is awful and false; therefore the argument

from which it is fairly drawn must be false. Again. If *uper* signifies "in the room and stead of," then the reading of this verse (**Philippians 1:29**) would be thus: For unto you it is given, "in the room and stead of Christ," not only to believe in him, but to suffer "in his room and stead." From this reading, which the learned cannot deny to be just, if *uper* signifies what is stated in the objection, it follows, that *we* believe and suffer in the room and stead of Christ. From this verse we can understand those texts which assert that Christ "died for us," "suffered for us," etc. For Christ suffered (*uper*) *for* us; we must suffer (*uper*) *for* him. If *uper* in one case signifies "in the room and stead of," then it must in the other case. To say that we suffer in the room or stead of Christ, would not be so proper; hence the translators rendered *uper* "for the sake of." By this authority we may say that "Christ suffering for us," means "Christ suffering for our sake," or upon our account.--Christ dying for sin, means, his dying on account of sin, to condemn and destroy it. This translation of the word will be applicable in most cases, where it is used, in the New Testament.

Objection 2. The sacrifices under the law were typical of Christ. Hence it is concluded that Christ was our substitute, and that our sins were imputed to him.

Answer. It will be granted by all, that the victims slain in sacrifice under the law, were not designed to affect or change the mind of God, not to be an equivalent or satisfaction for sin. "The earth, and the fullness thereof, the cattle on a thousand hills, are all the Lord's"; therefore the Israelites, who offered sacrifices, gave him nothing but what was *his* originally; consequently the victim slain could not be an equivalent for their sin. The whole design of the sacrifices must then be to affect, or influence the mind of him that offered them. The Apostle to the Hebrews gives us a key to unlock the mysteries of the law of Moses. "Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God." (**Hebrews 6:1**). The Jews were very tenacious of their customs and laws. Paul exhorted them to leave those ceremonies, which he called the principles or first elements of the doctrine of Christ. These first elements were the A, B, C, of his doctrine; that doctrine of grace which he preached on earth. They were suited to the infant state of the Jewish church, and the then existing state of the world. Hence the

Apostle calls the law a "shadow of good things to come" (**Hebrews 10:1**), and that the "sacrifices, which they offered year by year, could not make the comers thereunto perfect"; and again, it is said "to make nothing perfect"; that is, in a comparative sense; it was not so clear, pure and spiritual as the New-Testament dispensation--it was not the finishing dispensation. Therefore to continue it, when the clearer light appeared, was to retain the shadow instead of the substance. For this reason the law is called a school-master to lead us to Christ. But after that faith (Christ the object of faith) is come, there is no more need of a school-master or the law. (**Galatians 3:24**). Therefore seeing that Christ the perfection of all is come, let us leave these principles and go on to perfection; the perfection of the doctrine of Christ, which he has revealed in its full glory. "The dead works" are evidently the sacrifices; called "dead works," because of the slaughter and death of the victims slain for sacrifice. These dead works, or sacrifices, were "the foundation of repentance," and faith towards God.

With this key let us go back to the law. Here is a transgressor; he brings a lamb to the altar; he lays his hand upon its head and confesses his sin; he must then with his own arm slay it, and have it burnt on the altar before his eyes. (**Leviticus 1**, etc.) "By this a remembrance of sin was made," which led to repentance. (**Hebrews 10:3**). The death of this lamb was an ocular demonstration, or outward visible sign of the evil and wages of sin; his sin was the cause why this lamb was slain. When he offered in faith of God's appointment, as Abel and the believing Jews did, he was led to repentance; and when he repented he was forgiven; for I proved before, that repentance always precedes forgiveness. Hence said the Apostle, "without shedding of blood is no remission." (**Hebrews 9:22**). This lamb was a faint shadow of the great "*Lamb of God* which taketh away the sin of the world." (**John 1:29**). For says the prophet, "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him." (**Zechariah 12:10**).

It is a very common assertion, that those who offered sacrifices acceptably, always had respect to the blood of Christ, which was to be shed in future. As it is an assertion not expressed in the Bible, I would propose a few things for examination. How shall we certainly know that they had respect to the blood of Christ, if it be not revealed? Were not the Jews ignorant of it at the time when Christ came into the

world, seeing it was a common opinion among them that Christ should abide forever, without tasting death? Besides they could not see the end of those things. (**2 Corinthians 3:13**). Were the disciples of Christ saved and justified by faith in the blood of Jesus, when they would not believe that he should die? Though often instructed by Christ himself that he should die, yet they did not believe it till the fact proved it. If they were justified, and no doubt they were, they must have been justified under the old dispensation. These things are proposed for examination; and let them be candidly investigated. We all agree that there is *now* no other name under heaven by which we can be saved, but the name of Jesus.

When the worshippers offered sacrifice in faith, as Abel, Moses, etc. (**Hebrews 11**), then good effects followed, as atonement, reconciliation, propitiation, etc. but if they did not offer in faith, "it was impossible to please God," and none of the good effects just mentioned followed; but their sacrifice was an abomination to him. (**Proverbs 15:8; Leviticus 26:31; Psalm 50:8-14; Isaiah 1:11-13; Jeremiah 6:20; Amos 5:21, 22; Micah 6:7**). And it is in this respect, that it was not possible for the blood of bulls, etc. to take away sin. (**Hebrews 10:4**). Hence it undeniably follows that these sacrifices were not designed to make satisfaction for sin to the justice or law of God, but to lead and influence the offerer to repentance and reconciliation to God.

Objection 3. "The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all; he was oppressed and afflicted; he shall bear their iniquities; he bore the sins of many; he bore our sins in his own body on the tree." (**Isaiah 53:6, 7, 11, 12; Hebrews 9:28; 1 Peter 2:24**). Hence it is concluded that our sins were imputed to him as our surety or substitute, and that he suffered in our room and stead.

Answer. If Christ as surety bore iniquities, he bore the iniquities of *all*. For the prophet in the same chapter, tells you, "*All we* like sheep have gone astray, we have turned *every one* to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of *us all*." This, as before shown, will establish the doctrine of universal salvation. But can any person who reads the history of the wicked Jews of that day, think that they were all saved? The explanation of **Isaiah 53**, quoted above, we find given by inspiration. "When the even was come, they brought unto

him many oppressed with devils; and he cast out the spirits with his word, and he healed all that were sick; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare out sickness." (**Matthew 8:16, 17**) "He bare our sicknesses." How? was it by imputation? No: for he was not made sick in the room and stead of those whom he healed. He was not possessed of the devils of those out of whom he cast them. How then did he bear our sicknesses? By healing, or bearing them away from us. So he bare out iniquities, and griefs; that is, he bears them away. In this there seems to be an allusion to the *scapegoat*, which bore off the sins of the Israelites to a land not inhabited; that is, where they would not be seen or found again. For as sin is not a substance, but a quality; when the mind, by faith in Christ, is delivered from it, it ceases to exist, and is therefore nowhere to be found. (Compare **Hebrews 9:28; 1 Peter 2:24**. Greek).

The Scriptures speak of another way of bearing iniquities, and griefs. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." (**Galatians 6:2**). These burdens were the sins and infirmities of the brethren (**Galatians 6:1**) by which others were grieved and burdened. "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. For even Christ pleased not himself, but as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee, fell on me." (**Romans 15:1-3**). Ezekiel, in vision, bore the iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah, and the Lord laid on him the iniquity of that nation. (**Ezekiel 4:4-6**). The high priest bore the iniquity of the children of Israel, when he went into the holy place.--The prophets bore the burden of Tyre, Sidon, Egypt, Damascus, Babylon, the Valley of vision, or land of Israel. What was the burden of the prophets? It was the sin and impending misery of those cities and countries.--What was the effect of this burden in the prophets?--"Their loins were filled with pain; pangs took hold of them, as the pangs of a woman that travaileth; they were bowed down, and dismayed at the hearing and seeing the awful state of those cities and nations." (**Isaiah 21:3, 4**, etc.). In this way the iniquity of the world, the whole world were laid on Christ, which made him a *man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*; which oppressed and afflicted him, and made him fall prostrate on the ground in the garden: This made Jesus travail in pain; but "he shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied." (**Isaiah 53:11**).

It is evident that Christians according to their measure, have fellowship in the sufferings of Christ, and are filling up that which is behind of his afflictions in their body. (**Philippians 3:10; Colossians 1:24**). On them are often laid the iniquities or burden, of their families--their neighbors--the world. Under this burden we see them grieved, afflicted, oppressed; and even falling prostrate in agony on the ground. This is the spirit of Jesus; this, as well as persecution and death, is the fellowship of his sufferings.

Objection 4. "Death is the wages of sin: But Christ suffered death; therefore, he was a sinner. He was not really a sinner; therefore he was by imputation."

Answer. Christ died, not because he was a sinner *really*, or by imputation, but as I proved before, to show the strength of the love of God, and the evils of sin, and by this to reconcile us to God. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. This commandment have I received of my Father." (**John 10:17, 18**). It is astonishing to think how powerfully antiquity sanctions error.

Objection 5. "God must display his infinite hatred to sin, and this could not be done, unless the sinner, or his surety, or substitute, suffer infinitely or eternally."

Answer. The objection is founded in error. For it implies that the death of Christ, was for the purpose of displaying the wrath of God, or hatred to sin, or his anger against the sinner. The Scripture nowhere speaks of this as the design of Christ's death; but, as I proved before, it speaks of his death for a contrary purpose, viz. to set forth and manifest the love of God to sinners and thereby reconcile them. It is true, the hatred of God to sin is seen in the death of Jesus; and the length, in which men may be led by it, is clearly seen in the Jews, his murderers. Never was the nature of God, and the malignity of sin, so clearly contrasted as we see them in the death of Christ: And none can view them in the light of faith, without loving the former and hating the latter.

According to the objection, the sufferings of Jesus were infinite; an opinion much insisted on, and on which much of scholastic divinity is founded, yet destitute of proof, from the word of God. According to the objection Christ was a surety or substitute. The fallacy of this has been already abundantly shown.

Objection 6. "The honors of God's law, justice and government must be secured, or the sinner cannot be saved."

Answer. *The law is magnified and made honorable.* Because Jesus was made under it, and perfectly obeyed it in every jot and tittle. Had the law not been holy, just and good, he would not have done this honor to it.--Christ *declared that God could be just in justifying him that believeth in Jesus.* (**Romans 3:25**). It is nowhere in the Bible said, that Christ came to make God just, in justifying believers; but *to declare that he might or could be just in doing it.* The Legislature of Kentucky, and every government I am acquainted with, has a law that all murderers shall be put to death; suppose the greater part of the Commonwealth are guilty of the crime--they are justly condemned. The Legislature pities their situation; suppose they have it in their power to make another law, by which the minds of these murderers are brought to repent of their crime, and are effectually changed to be good, holy and just citizens in future. Are not the honors of law, justice and government secured? Those men have now the very spirit of the law in their hearts, therefore law, justice and government are satisfied. The application is easy.

Objection 7. "It pleased the Lord to bruise Christ and put him to grief." (**Isaiah 53**).

Answer. And shall we conclude from this, that God himself did actually bruise and kill his own son? If so; how can the Jews be charged with the murder? All the evangelists, in giving the history of Christ's death, agree in asserting that the murderers were wicked men. Peter charges the Jews with the murder. (**Acts 2**). Paul charges the devil with it. (**Hebrews 2:14**). The devil was the instigator and wicked men the agents. God bruised Christ in the same manner that he tempted David to sin in numbering Israel--as he hardened Pharaoh's heart, etc. But the Scripture plainly tells us, that God did not tempt David to sin in numbering Israel, (for He tempteth no man,

James 1:13) but Satan did it. (**1 Chronicles 21:1**). God did not harden Pharaoh's heart, (for he is not the author of sin), but Pharaoh did it himself. (**Exodus 8**). So God did not bruise his son actually, for the devil and wicked men did it. The plain meaning of these passages is, that God did not interpose his power to prevent these events from taking place. Hence the exclamation of Christ on the cross, when the dogs of hell were let loose against him; when in the hands of his enemies, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me."

Objection 8. "Awake O sword against my shepherd; against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord." (**Zech. 13:7**).

Answer. Tradition has sanctioned it as the truth of God, that this sword is *the sword of justice*!! There never was a more unjust sword in the world than that which slew the innocent Savior. His most inveterate enemies could not convict him of sin, or lay any just charge or accusation against him. To say he was slain by the sword of justice, or justice itself, is to clear the Jews, and join with them in saying, "This man was worthy of death." But there is not a hint in the Bible of justice being ever called a sword. That sword which slew him, I have just shown, viz. *wicked men*; for they are the sword of the Lord. "Arise, O Lord, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword." (**Psalms 17:13**).

Objection 9. "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." (**Galatians 3:13**).

Answer. In answer to this objection, it may be worthy of enquiry what is *the curse of the law*? We have already seen that the law is love. What curse can there be in love? Not any. The curse is misery arising from the *want* of love to God and man, and all those actions which are the native fruits of this *want*. How, then, can Christ be said to be "made a curse for us"? Was he in reality cursed by the law, or by God the author of it? No, in no wise. Neither can it be proved, that any person at that time thought so but the wicked. The apostle, whose words are brought forward in the objection, has assured us "that no man speaking by the spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed." (**1 Corinthians 12:3**). He has sufficiently explained his meaning in the passage which is objected by quoting these words from the writings

of Moses, "for it is written cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." For the confirmation of truth, or to seal the testimony, Jesus submitted to be hanged on a tree, or crucified, as though he were a real malefactor. And in this sense only he can be said to be *made a curse for us*. And thus by faith in this testimony the sinner is redeemed from the curse if the law or from the misery arising out of sin. If Christ bore the curse of the law in reality, as our substitute, or surety, the question still occurs; Why do we suffer it again?

Objection 10. "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." (**Matthew 26:39**) "The cup that my father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (**John 18:11**). It is thought by some that his cup was the wrath of God, which Christ had to endure.

Answer. If so, Christ gave his disciples poor encouragement when he said "Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with." (**Matthew 20:22, 23**). All these passages mean nothing more than his suffering, and the suffering of his disciples, as is plain from the contexts. But these sufferings proceeded from the wrath of Hell and wicked men, as proved before.

Objection 11. This scheme is contrary to the system of the fathers, and reformed churches.

Answer. If it be the truth of God, let every system contrary to it fall. It is evident that the churches have been wrong. Witness the parties, the bitterness, the envy, the cold formality, and deadness which exist, to the disgrace of the Christian religion. Truth, and truth only will make us free.

Thus at your request, I have given you as brief and unequivocal a view of my present sentiments, on the subjects you desired, as time and a multiplicity of other business, would permit. And now I leave you to judge for yourself. Take the word of God, and search the Scriptures whether these things be so. Much smoke, no doubt, will be cast in your eyes; but look to God and cry for truth, and you shall find it. Many *scare-crows* will be set up to deter you; as Arianism, Socinianism, Pelagianism, Deism, etc. etc. But follow the Lord in his word. The red Dragon always had his eye on the woman when travelling to bring forth the man-child, *truth*; and though he often cast

floods of water after it, to destroy it, yet it was always preserved. The woman is now travailing to bring it forth; and the earth will help her. Prove all things by the only true standard, the Bible: hold fast that which is good; that is, gospel truth, which leads to love, to holiness, to God.

COME LORD JESUS, COME QUICKLY. *Amen.*

Yours in the bonds of love,

B. W. STONE.

THE END.

ABOUT THE ELECTRONIC EDITION

Barton W. Stone's *Atonement: The Substance of Two Letters Written to a Friend* (Lexington, KY: Joseph Charless, 1805) has been transcribed from a microfilm copy of the book kindly lent by Abilene Christian University's Center for Restoration Studies. Thanks to Dr. Hans Rollmann for providing the photocopies. Modernization completed by Ernie Stefanik.

This modernized edition of Stone's *Atonement* differs from the first edition in the follow particulars:

- (1) Words rendered in both American and British spellings in the printed text (for example, "neighbor" and "neighbour," "honor" and "honour") have been standardized with American English spellings.
- (2) Orthographical and/or typographical errors have been corrected.
- (3) Abbreviations of words in headings have been eschewed.
- (4) Capitalization has been normalized following modern conventions of American English (for instance, the words "Christian," "Bible," "Scripture," and "New Testament" are so capitalized throughout).
- (5) Scripture references follow the current practices for such citations (namely, using a colon to separate chapter and verse and semicolon references). Standard abbreviations of Bible book name are employed throughout. These citations are generally enclosed within parentheses and follow the quotation. In eighteen instances, where the citation in the printed text precedes the quotation, the Scripture reference has been moved to follow the quotation in the electronic version; these are indicated by an asterisk in the critical apparatus. Some corrections have been offered in Scripture citations, but not all have been rigorously checked for accuracy.
- (6) Interpolations within quotations have been enclosed within brackets rather than parentheses, as in the printed text.
- (7) In the printed text, the letter "f" substitutes for the "long s" commonly employed in pre-nineteenth century printing; in the electronic version, the letter "s" replaces all such uses of the letter "f."

- (8) In this edition headings have been set in larger type and subheadings in italic type. Numbers of subsections have been enclosed within parentheses.
- (9) Changes in punctuation have been made only absolutely necessary, and then for the sake of consistency. For example, in the printed text either quotation marks or italics specify quotations from Scripture; in the electronic version, quotation marks have been used for this purpose, and quotations in italic type have been rendered in roman type. Where dashes have been used as separators in the printed text, commas or semicolons have been substituted in the electronic version. Where end punctuation is missing in the printed text, it has been supplied in this edition. In general, rules and conventions of American English have been followed.

The types of alterations delineated above are intended only to make this work more accessible to the reader. Every effort has been made to preserve the words and thoughts of the author.

Other formatting changes have been made to give the book a more up-to-date look, including **bold** font (all of which was added in 2013).

This version of Stone's *Atonement* is made available in pdf and e-Sword formats through www.GravelHillchurchofChrist.com