

**The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S  
SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY**

**1851**

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**LECTURE XXXIV.**

**ATONEMENT.**

We come now to the consideration of a very important feature of the moral government of God; namely, the atonement.

In discussing this subject, I will--

I. CALL ATTENTION TO SEVERAL WELL-ESTABLISHED PRINCIPLES OF GOVERNMENT, IN THE LIGHT OF WHICH OUR INVESTIGATION WILL PROCEED.

II. DEFINE THE TERM ATONEMENT AS USED IN THIS DISCUSSION.

III. INQUIRE INTO THE TEACHINGS OF NATURAL THEOLOGY, OR INTO THE *À PRIORI* AFFIRMATIONS OF REASON UPON THIS SUBJECT.

IV. SHOW THE FACT OF ATONEMENT.

V. THE DESIGN OF ATONEMENT.

VI. EXTENT OF ATONEMENT.

VII. ANSWER OBJECTIONS.

*I. I will call attention to several well-established principles of government.*

1. We have already seen that moral law is not founded in the mere arbitrary will of God or of any other being, but that it has its foundation in the nature and relations of moral agents, that it is that rule of action or of willing which is imposed on them by the law of their own intellect.

2. As the will of no being can create moral law, so the will of no being can repeal or alter moral law. It being just that rule of action that is agreeable to the nature and relations of moral agents, it is as immutable as those natures and relations.

3. There is a distinction between the letter and the spirit of moral law. The letter relates to the outward life or action; the spirit respects the motive or intention from which the act should proceed. For example: the spirit of the moral law requires disinterested benevolence, and is all expressed in one word--love. The letter of the law is found in the commandments of the decalogue, and in divers other precepts relating to outward acts.

4. To the letter of the law there may be many exceptions, but to the spirit of moral law there can be no exception. That is, the spirit of the moral law may sometimes admit and require, that the letter of the law shall be disregarded or violated; but the spirit of the law ought never to be disregarded or violated. For example: the letter of the law prohibits all labour on the sabbath day. But the spirit of the law often requires labour on the sabbath. The spirit of the law requires the exercise of universal and perfect love or benevolence to God and man, and the law of benevolence often requires that labour shall be done on the sabbath; as administering to the sick, relieving the poor, feeding animals; and in short, whatever is plainly the work of necessity or mercy, in such a sense that enlightened benevolence demands it, is required by the spirit of moral law upon the sabbath, as well as all other days. This is expressly taught by Christ, both by precept and example. So again, the letter of the law says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die;" but the spirit of the law admits and requires that upon certain conditions, to be examined in their proper place, the soul that sinneth shall live. The letter of the law is inexorable; it condemns and sentences to death all violators of its precepts, without regard to atonement or repentance. The spirit of moral law allows and requires that upon condition of satisfaction being made to public justice, and the return of the sinner to obedience, he shall live and not die.

5. In establishing a government and promulgating law, the lawgiver is always understood as pledging himself duly to administer the laws in support of public order, and for the promotion of public morals, to reward the innocent with his favour and protection, and to punish the disobedient with the loss of his protection and favour.

6. Laws are public property in which every subject of the government has an interest. Every obedient subject of government is interested to have law supported and obeyed, and wherever the law is violated, every subject of the government is injured, and his rights are invaded; and each and all have a right to expect the government duly to execute the penalties of law when it is violated.

7. There is an important distinction between retributive and public justice. Retributive justice consists in treating every subject of government according to his character. It respects the intrinsic merit or demerit of each individual, and deals with him accordingly. Public justice, in its exercise, consists in the promotion and protection of the public interests, by such legislation and such an administration of law, as is demanded by the highest good of the public. It implies the execution of the penalties of law where the precept is violated, unless something else is done that will as effectually secure the public

interests. When this is done, public justice demands, that the execution of the penalty shall be dispensed with by extending pardon to the criminal. Retributive justice makes no exceptions, but punishes without mercy in every instance of crime. Public justice makes exceptions, as often as this is permitted or required by the public good. Public justice is identical with the spirit of the moral law, and in its exercise, regards only the spirit of the law. Retributive justice cleaves to the letter, and makes no exceptions to the rule, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die."

8. The design of legal penalties is to secure obedience to the precept. The same is also the reason for executing them when the precept is violated. The sanctions are to be regarded as an expression of the views of the lawgiver, in respect to the importance of his law; and the execution of penalties is designed and calculated to evince his sincerity in enacting, and his continued adherence to, and determination to abide by, the principles of his government as revealed in the law; his abhorrence of all crime; his regard to the public interests; and his unalterable determination to carry out, support, and establish, the authority of his law.

9. It is a fact well established by the experience of all ages and nations, that the exercise of mercy in setting aside the execution of penalties is a matter of extreme delicacy and danger. The influence of law, as might be expected, is found very much to depend upon the certainty felt by the subjects that it will be duly executed. It is found in experience, to be true, that the exercise of mercy in every government where no atonement is made, weakens government, by begetting and fostering a hope of impunity in the minds of those who are tempted to violate the law. It has been asserted, that the same is true when an atonement has been made, and that therefore, the doctrines of atonement and consequent forgiveness tend to encourage the hope of impunity in the commission of sin, and for this reason, are dangerous doctrines subversive of high and sound morality. This assertion I shall notice in its appropriate place.

10. Since the head of the government is pledged to protect and promote the public interests, by a due administration of law, if in any instance where the precept is violated, he would dispense with the execution of penalties, public justice requires that he shall see, that a substitute for the execution of law is provided, or that something is done that shall as effectually secure the influence of law, as the execution of the penalty would do. He cannot make exceptions to the spirit of the law. Either the soul that sinneth must die, according to the letter of the law, or a substitute must be provided in accordance with the spirit of the law.

11. Whatever will as fully evince the lawgiver's regard for his law, his determination to support it, his abhorrence of all violations of its precepts, and withal guard as effectually against the inference, that violaters of the precept might expect to escape with impunity, as the execution of the penalty would do, is a full satisfaction of public justice. When these conditions are fulfilled, and the sinner has returned to obedience, public justice not only admits, but absolutely demands, that the penalty shall be set aside by extending pardon to the offender. The offender still deserves to be punished, and upon the principles of retributive justice, might be punished according to his deserts. But the

public good admits and requires that upon the above conditions he should live, and hence, public justice, in compliance with the public interests and the spirit of the law of love, spares and pardons him.

12. If mercy or pardon is to be extended to any who have violated law, it ought to be done in a manner and upon some conditions that will settle the question, and establish the truth, that the execution of penalties is not to be dispensed with merely upon condition of the repentance of the offender. In other words, if pardon is to be extended, it should be known to be upon a condition not within the power of the offender. Else he may know, that he can violate the law, and yet be sure to escape with impunity, by fulfilling the conditions of forgiveness, which are, upon the supposition, all within his own power.

13. So, if mercy is to be exercised, it should be upon a condition that is not to be repeated. The thing required by public justice is, that nothing shall be done to undermine or disturb the influence of law. Hence it cannot consent to have the execution of penalties dispensed with, upon any condition that shall encourage the hope of impunity. Therefore, public justice cannot consent to the pardon of sin but upon condition of an atonement, and also upon the assumption that atonement is not to be repeated, nor to extend its benefits beyond the limits of the race for whom it was made, and that only for a limited time. If an atonement were to extend its benefits to all worlds and to all eternity, it would nullify its own influence, and encourage the universal hope of impunity, in case the precepts of the law were violated. This would be indefinitely worse than no atonement; and public justice might as well consent to have mercy exercised, without any regard to securing the authority and influence of law.

14. The spirit of the moral law can no more be dispensed with by the lawgiver than it can be repealed. The spirit of the law requires that, when the precept is violated, the penalty shall be executed, or that something shall be done that will as effectually and impressively negative the inference or assumption, that sin can escape with impunity under the government of God, beyond the limits of the race for whom the atonement was especially made, as the execution of the law would do. The following things must be true under a perfect government, as has been said above.

(1.) That sin cannot be forgiven merely upon condition of repentance; for this condition is within the power of the subject, so that he might then be sure of impunity.

(2.) Nor can it be forgiven upon a condition that shall be repeated, for this would encourage the hope of impunity.

(3.) Nor can it be forgiven upon a condition that will extend to all worlds, and throughout all eternity, for this would be equivalent to forgiving sin merely upon condition of repentance, without any reference to the authority of law or to public justice.

(4.) Hence it is evident that it must originate in sovereign clemency, subject to the previous conditions.

## II. Define the term Atonement.

The English word atonement is synonymous with the Hebrew word *cofer*. This is a noun from the verb *caufar*, to cover. The *cofer* or cover, was the name of the lid or cover of the ark of the covenant, and constituted what was called the mercy-seat. The Greek word rendered atonement is *katallage*. This means reconciliation to favour, or more strictly, the means or conditions of reconciliation to favour; from *katallasso*, to "change, or exchange." The term properly means substitution. An examination of these original words, in the connection in which they stand, will show that the atonement is the governmental substitution of the sufferings of Christ for the punishment of sinners. It is a covering of their sins by his sufferings.

III. *I am to inquire into the teachings of natural theology, or into the à priori affirmations of reason upon this subject.*

The doctrine of atonement has been regarded as so purely a doctrine of revelation as to preclude the supposition, that reason could, *à priori*, make any affirmations about it. It has been generally regarded as lying absolutely without the pale of natural theology, in so high a sense, that, aside from revelation, no assumption could be made, nor even a reasonable conjecture indulged. But there are certain facts in this world's history, that render this assumption exceedingly doubtful. It is true, indeed, that natural theology could not ascertain and establish the fact, that an atonement had been made, or that it certainly would be made; but if I am not mistaken, it might have been reasonably inferred, the true character of God being known and assumed, that an atonement of some kind would be made to render it consistent with his relations to the universe, to extend mercy to the guilty inhabitants of this world. The manifest necessity of a divine revelation has been supposed to afford a strong presumptive argument, that such a revelation has been or will be made. From the benevolence of God, as affirmed by reason, and manifested in his works and providence, it has been, as I suppose, justly inferred, that he would make arrangements to secure the holiness and salvation of men, and as a condition of this result, that he would grant them a further revelation of his will than had been given in creation and providence. The argument stands thus:--

1. From reason and observation we know that this is not a state of retribution; and from all the facts in the case that lie open to observation, this is evidently a state of trial or probation.

2. The providence of God in this world is manifestly disciplinary, and designed to reform mankind.

3. These facts, taken in connection with the great ignorance and darkness of the human mind on moral and religious subjects, afford a strong presumption that the benevolent Creator will make to the inhabitants of this world who are so evidently yet in a state of trial, a further revelation of his will. Now, if this argument is good, so far as it goes, I see not why we may not reasonably go still further.

Since the above are facts, and since it is also a fact that when the subject is duly considered, and the more thoroughly the better, there is manifestly a great difficulty in the exercise of mercy without satisfaction being made to public justice; and since the benevolence of God would not allow him on the one hand to pardon sin at the expense of public justice, nor on the other to punish or execute the penalty of law, if it could be wisely and consistently avoided, these facts being understood and admitted, it might naturally have been inferred, that the wisdom and benevolence of God would devise and execute some method of meeting the demands of public justice, that should render the forgiveness of sin possible. That the philosophy of government would render this possible is to us very manifest. I know, indeed, that with the light the gospel has afforded us, we much more clearly discern this, than they could who had no other light than that of nature. Whatever might have been known to the ancients, and those who have not the Bible, I think that, when the facts are announced by revelation, we can see that such a governmental expedient was not only possible, but just what might have been expected of the benevolence of God. It would of course have been impossible for us, *à priori*, to have devised, or reasonably conjectured, the plan that has been adopted. So little was known or knowable on the subject of the Trinity of God without revelation, that natural theology could, perhaps, in its best estate, have taught nothing further than that, if it was possible, some governmental expedient would be resorted to, and was in contemplation, for the ultimate restoration of the sinning race, who were evidently spared hitherto from the execution of law, and placed under a system of discipline.

But since the gospel has announced the fact of the atonement, it appears that natural theology or governmental philosophy can satisfactorily explain it; that reason can discern a divine philosophy in it.

Natural theology can teach--

1. That the human race is in a fallen state, and that the law of selfishness, and not the law of benevolence, is that to which unconverted men conform their lives.

2. It can teach that God is benevolent, and hence that mercy must be an attribute of God. And that this attribute will be manifested in the actual pardon of sin, when this can be done with safety to the divine government.

3. Consequently that no atonement could be needed to satisfy any implacable spirit in the divine mind; that he was sufficiently and infinitely disposed to extend pardon to the penitent, if this could be wisely, benevolently, and safely done.

4. It can also abundantly teach, that there is a real and a great difficulty and danger in the exercise of mercy under a moral government, and supremely great under a government so vast and so enduring as the government of God; that, under such a government, the danger is very great, that the exercise of mercy will be understood as encouraging the hope of impunity in the commission of sin.

5. It can also show the indispensable necessity of such an administration of the divine government as to secure the fullest confidence throughout the universe, in the sincerity of God in promulgating his law with its tremendous penalty, and of his unalterable adherence to its spirit, and determination not to falter in carrying out and securing its authority at all events. That this is indispensable to the well-being of the universe, is entirely manifest.

6. Hence it is very obvious to natural theology, that sin cannot be pardoned without something is done to forbid the otherwise natural inference, that sin will be forgiven under the government of God upon condition of repentance alone, and of course upon a condition within the power of the sinner himself. It must be manifest, that to proclaim throughout the universe that sin would be pardoned universally upon condition of repentance alone, would be a virtual repeal of the divine law. All creatures would instantly perceive, that no one need to fear punishment, in any case, as his forgiveness was secure, however much he might trample on the divine authority, upon a single condition which he could at will perform.

7. Natural theology is abundantly competent to show, that God could not be just to his own intelligence, just to his character, and hence just to the universe, in dispensing with the execution of the Divine law, except upon the condition of providing a substitute of such a nature as to reveal as fully, and impress as deeply, the lessons that would be taught by the execution, as the execution itself would do. The great design of penalties is prevention, and this is of course the design of executing penalties. The head of every government is pledged to sustain the authority of law, by a due administration of rewards and punishments, and has no light in any instance to extend pardon, except upon conditions that will as effectually support the authority of law as the execution of its penalties would do. It was never found to be safe, or even possible, under any government, to make the universal offer of pardon to violators of law, upon the bare condition of repentance, for the very obvious reason already suggested, that it would be a virtual repeal of all law. Public justice, by which every executive magistrate in the universe is bound, sternly and peremptorily forbids that mercy shall be extended to any culprit, without some equivalent being rendered to the government, that is, without something being done that will fully answer as a substitute for the execution of penalties. This principle God fully admits to be binding upon him; and hence he affirms that he gave his Son to render it just in him to forgive sin. Rom. iii. 24-26: "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

8. All nations have felt the necessity of expiatory sacrifices. This is evident from the fact that all nations have offered them. Hence *antipscucha*, or ransoms for their souls, have been offered by nearly every nation under heaven. (See Buck's Theo. Dic. p. 539.)

9. The wisest heathen philosophers, who saw the intrinsic inefficacy of animal sacrifices, held that God could not forgive sin. This proves to a demonstration, that they felt the necessity of an atonement, or expiatory sacrifice. And having too just views of

God and his government, to suppose that either animal, or merely human, sacrifices, could be efficacious under the government of God, they were unable to understand upon what principles sin could be forgiven.

10. Public justice required, either that an atonement should be made, or that the law should be executed upon every offender. By public justice is intended, that due administration of law, that shall secure in the highest manner, which the nature of the case admits, private and public interests, and establish the order and well-being of the universe. In establishing the government of the universe, God had given the pledge, both impliedly and expressly, that he would regard the public interests, and by a due administration of the law, secure and promote, as far as possible, public and individual happiness.

11. Public justice could strictly require only the execution of law; for God had neither expressly nor impliedly given a pledge to do anything more for the promotion of virtue and happiness, than to administer due rewards to the righteous, and due punishment to the wicked. Yet an atonement, as we shall see, would more fully meet the necessities of government, and act as a more efficient preventive of sin, and a more powerful persuasive to holiness, than the infliction of the legal penalty would do.

12. An atonement was needed for the removal of obstacles to the free exercise of benevolence toward our race. Without an atonement, the race of man after the fall sustained to the government of God the relation of rebels and outlaws. And before God, as the great executive magistrate of the universe, could manifest his benevolence toward them, an atonement must be decided upon and made known, as the reason upon which his favourable treatment of them was conditioned.

13. An atonement was needed to promote the glory and influence of God in the universe. But more of this hereafter.

14. An atonement was needed to present overpowering motives to repentance.

15. An atonement was needed, that the offer of pardon might not seem like connivance at sin.

16. An atonement was needed to manifest the sincerity of God in his legal enactments.

17. An atonement was needed to make it safe to present the offer and promise of pardon.

18. Natural theology can inform us, that, if the lawgiver would or could condescend so much to deny himself, as to attest his regard to his law, and his determination to support it by suffering its curse, in such a sense as was possible and consistent with his character and relations, and so far forth as emphatically to inculcate the great lesson, that sin was not to be forgiven upon the bare condition of repentance in any case, and also to establish the universal conviction, that the execution of law was not to be dispensed with, but that

it is an unalterable rule under his divine government, that where there is sin there must be inflicted suffering--this would be so complete a satisfaction of public justice, that sin might safely be forgiven.

#### IV. *The fact of atonement.*

This is purely a doctrine of revelation, and in the establishment of this truth appeal must be made to the scriptures alone.

1. The whole Jewish scriptures, and especially the whole ceremonial dispensation of the Jews, attest, most unequivocally, the necessity of an atonement.

2. The New Testament is just as unequivocal in its testimony to the same point. The apostle Paul expressly asserts, that "without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin."

I shall here take it as established, that Christ was properly "God manifest in the flesh," and proceed to cite a few out of the great multitude of passages, that attest the fact of his death, and also its vicarious nature; that is, that it was for us, and as a satisfaction to public justice for our sins, that his blood was shed. I will first quote a few passages to show that the atonement and redemption through it, was a matter of understanding and covenant between the Father and the Son. "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant. Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah."--Ps. lxxxix, 3, 4. "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."--Isaiah liii. 10, 11, 12. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me: and he that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."--John vi. 37, 38, 39. "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are."--John xvii. 6, 9, 11.

I will next quote some passages to show, that, if sinners were to be saved at all, it must be through an atonement. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."--Acts iv. 12. "Be it known unto you therefore men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you

the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Acts xiii. 38, 39. "Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Rom. iii. 19, 20. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."--Gal. ii. 16, 21. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but the man that doeth them shall live in them. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the law, then, against the promises of God? God forbid, for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."--Gal. iii. 10-12, 18-21, 24. "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these."

I will now cite some passages that establish the fact of the vicarious death of Christ, and redemption through his blood. "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. 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."--Isaiah liiii. 5, 6. "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."--Matt. xx. 28. "For this is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins."--Matt. xxvi. 28. "And 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 iii. 14, 15. "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."--John vi. 51. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."--Acts xx. 28. "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. To declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ

died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."--Rom. iii. 24-26; v. 9-11, 18, 19. "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: for I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures."--1 Cor. v. 7; xv. 3. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree. That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."--Gal. ii. 20; iii. 13, 14. "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour."--Eph. ii. 13; v. 2. "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many: and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."--Heb. ix. 12-14, 22-28. "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."--Heb. x. 10-14. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he has consecrate for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh," &c.--Heb. x. 19, 20. "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, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."--1 Pet. i. 18, 19. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that

we being dead to sins should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed."--1 Pet. ii. 24. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit."--1 Peter iii. 18. "But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."--1 John i. 7. "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin."--1 John iii. 5. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. 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 iv. 9, 10.

These, as every reader of the Bible must know, are only some of the passages that teach the doctrine of atonement and redemption by the death of Christ. It is truly wonderful in how many ways this doctrine is taught, assumed, and implied in the Bible. Indeed, it is emphatically the great theme of the Bible. It is expressed or implied upon nearly every page of Divine inspiration.

V. *The next inquiry is into the design of the atonement.*

The answer to this inquiry has been, already, in part, unavoidably anticipated. Under this head I will show,--

1. That Christ's obedience to the moral law as a covenant of works, did not constitute the atonement.

(1.) Christ owed obedience to the moral law, both as God and man. He was under as much obligation to be perfectly benevolent as any moral agent is. It was, therefore, impossible for him to perform any works of supererogation; that is, so far as obedience to law was concerned, he could, neither as God nor as man, do anything more than fulfil its obligations.

(2.) Had he obeyed for us, he would not have suffered for us. Were his obedience to be substituted for our obedience, he need not certainly have both fulfilled the law for us, as our substitute, under a covenant of works, and at the same time have suffered as a substitute, in submitting to the penalty of the law.

(3.) If he obeyed the law as our substitute, then why should our own return to personal obedience be insisted upon as a *sine quà non* of our salvation?

(4.) The idea that any part of the atonement consisted in Christ's obeying the law for us, and in our stead and behalf, represents God as requiring:--

(i.) The obedience of our substitute.

(ii.) The same suffering, as if no obedience had been rendered.

(iii.) Our repentance.

(iv.) Our return to personal obedience.

(v.) And then represents him as, after all, ascribing our salvation to grace. Strange grace this, that requires a debt to be paid several times over, before the obligation is discharged!

2. I must show that the atonement was not a commercial transaction.

Some have regarded the atonement simply in the light of the payment of a debt; and have represented Christ as purchasing the elect of the Father, and paying down the same amount of suffering in his own person that justice would have exacted of them. To this I answer--

(1.) It is naturally impossible, as it would require that satisfaction should be made to retributive justice. Strictly speaking, retributive justice can never be satisfied, in the sense that the guilty can be punished as much and as long as he deserves; for this would imply that he was punished until he ceased to be guilty, or became innocent. When law is once violated, the sinner can make no satisfaction. He can never cease to be guilty, or to deserve punishment, and no possible amount of suffering renders him the less guilty or the less deserving of punishment; therefore, to satisfy retributive justice is impossible.

(2.) But, as we have seen in a former lecture, retributive justice must have inflicted on him eternal death. To suppose, therefore, that Christ suffered in amount, all that was due to the elect, is to suppose that he suffered an eternal punishment multiplied by the whole number of the elect.

3. The atonement of Christ was intended as a satisfaction of public justice.

(1.) The moral law did not originate in the divine will, but is founded in his self-existent and immutable nature. He cannot therefore repeal or alter it. To the letter of the moral law there may be exceptions, but to the spirit of the law no being can make exceptions. God cannot repeal the precept, and just for this reason, he cannot set aside the spirit of the sanctions. For to dispense with the sanctions were a virtual repeal of the precept. He cannot, therefore, set aside the execution of the penalty when the precept has been violated, without something being done that shall meet the demands of the true spirit of the law. "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Rom. iii. 24-26. This passage assigns the reason, or declares the design, of the atonement, to have been to justify God in the pardon of sin, or in dispensing with the execution of law.

Isa. xliii. 10-12: "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong: because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors: and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

(2.) Public justice requires,--

(i.) That penalties shall be annexed to laws that are equal to the importance of the precept.

(ii.) That when these penalties are incurred, they shall be inflicted for the public good, as an expression of the lawgiver's regard to law, of his determination to support public order, and by a due administration of justice, to secure the highest well-being of the public. A leading design of the sanctions of law is prevention; and the execution of penal sanctions is demanded by public justice. The great design of sanctions, both remuneratory and vindicatory, is to prevent disobedience, and secure obedience and universal happiness. This is done by such a revelation of the heart of the lawgiver, through the precept, sanctions, and execution of his law, as to beget awe on the one hand, and the most entire confidence and love on the other.

(iii.) Whatever can as effectually reveal God, make known his hatred to sin, his love of order, his determination to support government, and to promote the holiness and happiness of his creatures, as the execution of his law would do, is a full satisfaction of public justice.

(iv.) Atonement is, therefore, a part, and a most influential part, of moral government. It is an auxiliary to a strictly legal government. It does not take the place of the execution of law, in such a sense as to exclude penal inflictions from the universe. The execution of law still holds a place, and makes up an indispensable part of the great circle of motives essential to the perfection of moral government. Fallen angels, and the finally impenitent of this world, will receive the full execution of the penalty of the divine law. Atonement is an expedient above the letter, but in accordance with the spirit of law, which adds new and vastly influential motives to induce obedience. I have said, it is an auxiliary to law, adding to the precept and sanctions of law an overpowering exhibition of love and compassion.

(v.) The atonement is an illustrious exhibition of commutative justice, in which the government of God, by an act of infinite grace, commutes or substitutes the sufferings of Christ for the eternal damnation of sinners.

(vi.) An atonement was needed, and therefore doubtless designed, to contradict the slander of Satan. He had seduced our first parents by the insinuation that God was selfish,

in prohibiting their eating the fruit of a certain tree. Now, the execution of the penalty of his law, would not so thoroughly refute this abominable slander, as would the great self-denial of God exhibited in the atonement.

(vii.) An atonement was needed to inspire confidence in the offers and promises of pardon, and in all the promises of God to man. Guilty, selfish man finds it difficult, when thoroughly convicted of sin, to realize and believe, that God is actually sincere in his promises and offers of pardon and salvation. But whenever the soul can apprehend the reality of the atonement, it can then believe every offer and promise as the very thing to be expected from a being who could give his Son to die for enemies.

An atonement was needed, therefore, as the great and only means of sanctifying sinners--

Rom. viii. 3, 4. "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." The law was calculated, when once its penalty was incurred, to shut the sinner up in a dungeon, and only to develop more and more his depravity. Nothing could subdue his sin, and cause him to love, but the manifestation to him of disinterested benevolence. The atonement is just the thing to meet this necessity, and subdue rebellion.

(viii.) An atonement was needed, not to render God merciful, but to reconcile pardon with a due administration of justice. This has been virtually said before, but needs to be repeated in this connection.

Rom. iii. 22-26. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

I present several further reasons why an atonement in the case of the inhabitants of this world was preferable to punishment, or to the execution of the divine law. Several reasons have already been assigned, to which I will add the following, some of which are plainly revealed in the Bible; others are plainly inferrible from what the Bible does reveal; and others still are plainly inferrible from the very nature of the case.

(1.) God's great and disinterested love to sinners themselves was a prime reason for the atonement.

John iii. 16. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

(2.) His great love to the universe at large must have been another reason, inasmuch as it was impossible that the atonement should not exert an amazing influence over moral beings, in whatever world they might exist, and where the fact of atonement should be known.

(3.) Another reason for substituting the sufferings of Christ in the place of the eternal damnation of sinners, is, that an infinite amount of suffering might be prevented. The relation of Christ to the universe rendered his sufferings so infinitely valuable and influential, as an expression of God's abhorrence of sin on the one hand, and his great love to his subjects on the other, that an infinitely less amount of suffering in him than must have been inflicted on sinners, would be equally, and no doubt vastly more, influential in supporting the government of God, than the execution of the law upon them would have been. Be it borne in mind, that Christ was the lawgiver, and his suffering in behalf of sinners is to be regarded as the lawgiver and executive magistrate suffering in the behalf and stead of a rebellious province of his empire. As a governmental expedient it is easy to see the great value of such a substitute; that on the one hand it fully evinced the determination of the ruler not to yield the authority of his law, and on the other, to evince his great and disinterested love for his rebellious subjects.

(4.) By this substitution, an immense good might be gained, the eternal happiness of all that can be reclaimed from sin, together with all the augmented happiness of those who have never sinned, that must result from this glorious revelation of God.

(5.) Another reason for preferring the atonement to the punishment of sinners must have been, that sin had afforded an opportunity for the highest manifestation of virtue in God: the manifestation of forbearance, mercy, self-denial, and suffering for enemies that were within his own power, and for those from whom he could expect no equivalent in return.

It is impossible to conceive of a higher order of virtues than are exhibited in the atonement of Christ.

It was vastly desirable that God should take advantage of such an opportunity to exhibit his true character, and show to the universe what was in his heart. The strength and stability of any government must depend upon the estimation in which the sovereign is held by his subjects. It was therefore indispensable, that God should improve the opportunity, which sin had afforded, to manifest and make known his true character, and thus secure the highest confidence of his subjects.

(6.) Another reason for preferring atonement was, God's desire to lay open his heart to the inspection and imitation of moral beings.

(7.) Another reason is, because God is love, and prefers mercy when it can be safely exercised. The Bible represents him as delighting in mercy, and affirms that "judgment is his strange work."

Because he so much prefers mercy to judgment as to be willing to suffer as the sinner's substitute, to afford himself the opportunity to exercise pardon, on principles that are consistent with a due administration of justice.

(8.) In the atonement God consulted his own happiness and his own glory. To deny himself for the salvation of sinners, was a part of his own infinite happiness, always intended by him, and therefore always enjoyed. This was not selfishness in him, as his own well-being is of infinitely greater value than that of all the universe besides, he ought so to regard and treat it, because of its supreme and intrinsic value.

(9.) In making the atonement, God complied with the laws of his own intelligence, and did just that, all things considered, in the highest degree promotive of the universal good.

(10.) The atonement would present to creatures the highest possible motives to virtue. Example is the highest moral influence that can be exerted. If God, or any other being, would make others benevolent, he must manifest benevolence himself. If the benevolence manifested in the atonement does not subdue the selfishness of sinners, their case is hopeless.

(11.) It would produce among creatures the highest kind and degree of happiness, by leading them to contemplate and imitate his love.

(12.) The circumstances of his government rendered an atonement necessary; as the execution of law was not, as a matter of fact, a sufficient preventive of sin. The annihilation of the wicked would not answer the purposes of government. A full revelation of mercy, blended with such an exhibition of justice, was called for by the circumstances of the universe.

(13.) To confirm holy beings. Nothing could be more highly calculated to establish and confirm the confidence, love, and obedience of holy beings, than this disinterested manifestation of love to sinners and rebels.

(14.) To confound his enemies. How could anything be more directly calculated to silence all cavils, and to shut every mouth, and for ever close up all opposing lips, than such an exhibition of love and willingness to make sacrifices for sinners?

(15.) A just and necessary regard to his own reputation made him prefer atonement to the punishment of sinners.

A desire to sustain his own reputation, as the only moral power that could support his own moral government, must have been a leading reason for the atonement.

The atonement was preferred as the best, and perhaps only way to inspire an affectionate confidence in God.

It must have been the most agreeable to God, and the most beneficial to the universe.

(16.) Atonement would afford him an opportunity always to gratify his love in his kindness to sinners, in using means for their salvation, in forgiving and saving them when they repent, without the danger of its being inferred in the universe, that he had not a sufficient abhorrence for their sin.

(17.) Another reason for the atonement was, to counteract the influence of the devil, which was so extensively and powerfully exerted in this world for the promotion of selfishness.

(18.) To make the final punishment of the wicked more impressive in the light of the infinite love, manifest in the atonement.

(19.) The atonement is the highest testimony that God can bear against selfishness. It is the testimony of his own example.

(20.) The atonement is a higher expression of his regard for the public interest than the execution of law. It is, therefore, a fuller satisfaction to public justice.

(21.) The atonement so reveals all the attributes of God, as to complete the whole circle of motives needed to influence the minds of moral beings.

(22.) By dying in human nature, Christ exhibited his heart to both worlds.

(23.) The fact, that the execution of the law of God on rebel angels had not arrested, and could not arrest, the progress of rebellion in the universe, proves that something more needed to be done, in support of the authority of law, than would be done in the execution of its penalty upon rebels. While the execution of law may have a strong tendency to prevent the beginning of rebellion among loyal subjects, and to restrain rebels themselves; yet penal inflictions do not, in fact, subdue the heart, under any government, whether human or divine.

As a matter of fact, the law was only exasperating rebels, without confirming holy beings. Paul affirmed, that the action of the law upon his own mind, while in impenitence, was to beget in him all manner of concupiscence. One grand reason for giving the law was, to develop the nature of sin, and to show that the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. The law was therefore given that the offence might abound, that thereby it might be demonstrated, that without an atonement there could be no salvation for rebels under the government of God.

(24.) The nature, degree, and execution of the penalty of the law, made the holiness and the justice of God so prominent, as to absorb too much of public attention to be safe. Those features of his character were so fully revealed, by the execution of his law upon the rebel angels, that to have pursued the same course with the inhabitants of this world, without the offer of mercy, might have had, and doubtless would have had, an injurious influence upon the universe, by creating more of fear than of love to God and his government.

Hence, a fuller revelation of the love and compassion of God was necessary, to guard against the influence of slavish fear.

4. His taking human nature, and obeying unto death, under such circumstances, constituted a good reason for our being treated as righteous.

(1.) It is a common practice in human governments, and one that is founded in the nature and laws of mind, to reward distinguished public service by conferring favours on the children of those who have rendered this service, and treating them as if they had rendered it themselves. This is both benevolent and wise. Its governmental importance, its wisdom and excellent influence, have been most abundantly attested in the experience of nations.

(2.) As a governmental transaction, this same principle prevails, and for the same reason, under the government of God. All that are Christ's children and belong to him, are received for his sake, treated with favour, and the rewards of the righteous are bestowed upon them for his sake. And the public service which he has rendered to the universe, by laying down his life for the support of the divine government, has rendered it eminently wise, that all who are united to him by faith should be treated as righteous for its sake.

**The Rev. CHARLES G. FINNEY'S  
SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY**

**1851**

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**LECTURE XXXV.**

**EXTENT OF ATONEMENT.**

*VI. The extent of the atonement.*

In discussing this part of the subject, I must inquire briefly into the governmental value and bearings of the atonement.

1. It is valuable only as it tends to promote the glory of God, and the virtue and happiness of the universe.

2. In order to understand, in what the value of the atonement consists, we must understand:--

(1.) That happiness is an ultimate good.

(2.) That virtue is indispensable to happiness.

(3.) That the knowledge of God is indispensable to virtue.

(4.) That Christ, who made the atonement, is God.

(5.) That the work of atonement was the most interesting and impressive exhibition of God that ever was made in this world, and probably in the universe.

(6.) That, therefore, the atonement is the highest means of promoting virtue that exists in this world, and perhaps in the universe. And that it is valuable only, and just so far, as it reveals God, and tends to promote virtue and happiness.

(7.) That the work of atonement was a gratification of the infinite benevolence of God.

(8.) It was a work eternally designed by him, and, therefore, eternally enjoyed.

(9.) The design to make an atonement, together with the foreseen results which were, in an important sense, always present to him, have eternally caused no small part of the happiness of God.

(10.) The developement, or carrying out of this design, in the work of atonement, highly promotes, and will for ever promote, his glory in the universe.

(11.) Its value consists in its adaptedness to promote the virtue and happiness of holy angels, and all moral agents who have never sinned. As it is a new and most stupendous revelation of God, it must of course greatly increase their knowledge of God, and be greatly promotive of their virtue and happiness.

(12.) Its value consists in its adaptedness to prevent further rebellion against God in every part of the universe. The atonement exhibits God in such a light, as must greatly strengthen the confidence of holy beings in his character and government. It is therefore calculated, in the highest degree, to confirm holy beings in their allegiance to God, and thus prevent the further progress of rebellion. Let it be remembered, the value of the atonement consists in its moral power, or tendency, to promote virtue and happiness. Moral power is the power of motive.

The highest moral power is the influence of example. Advice has moral power. Precept has moral power. Sanction has moral power. But example is the highest moral influence that can be exerted by any being. Moral beings are so created as to be naturally influenced by the example of each other. The example of a child, as a moral influence, has power upon other children. The example of an adult, as a moral influence, has power. The example of great men and of angels, has great moral power. But the example of God is the highest moral influence in the universe.

The word of God has power. His commands, threatenings, promises; but his example is a higher moral influence than his precepts or his threatenings.

Virtue consists in benevolence. God requires benevolence; threatens all his subjects with punishment if they are not benevolent, and promises them eternal life if they are. All this has power. But his example, his own benevolence, his own disinterested love, as expressed in the atonement, has a vastly higher moral influence than his word, or any other of his manifestations.

Christ is God. In the atonement, God has given us the influence of his own example, has exhibited his own love, his own compassion, his own self-denial, his own patience, his own long-suffering, under abuse from enemies. In the atonement he has exhibited all the highest and most perfect forms of virtue, has united himself with human nature, has exhibited these forms of virtue to the inspection of our senses, and laboured, wept, suffered, bled, and died for man. This is not only the highest revelation of God that could be given to man; but is giving the whole weight of his own example in favour of all the virtues which he requires of man.

This is the highest possible moral influence. It is properly moral omnipotence; that is, the influence of the atonement, when apprehended by the mind, will accomplish whatever is within the compass of moral power to effect. Moral power cannot compel a moral agent, nor set aside his freedom, for this is not an object of moral power; but it will do all that motive can, in the nature of the case, accomplish. It is the highest and most weighty motive that the mind of a moral being can conceive. It is the most moving, impressive, and influential consideration in the universe.

Its value may be estimated, by its moral influence in the promotion of holiness among all holy beings.

1. Their complacent love to God must depend upon their knowledge of him.
2. As he is infinite, and all creatures are finite, finite beings know him only as he is pleased to reveal himself.
3. The atonement has disclosed or revealed to the universe of holy beings, a class and an order of virtues, as resident in the divine mind, which, but for the atonement, would probably have for ever remained unknown.
4. As the atonement is the most impressive revelation of God of which we have any knowledge, or can form any conception, we have reason to believe, that it has greatly increased the holiness and happiness of all holy creatures, that it has done more than any other, and perhaps every other, revelation of God, to exalt his character, strengthen his government, enlighten the universe, and increase its happiness.
5. The value of the atonement may be estimated by the amount of good it has done, and will do, in this world. The atonement is an exhibition of God suffering as a substitute for his rebellious subjects. His relation to the law and to the universe, is that which gives his sufferings such boundless value. I have said, in a former lecture, that the utility of executing penal sanctions consists in the exhibition it makes of the true character and designs of the lawgiver. It creates public confidence, makes a public impression, and thus strengthens the influence of government, and is in this way promotive of order and happiness. The atonement is the highest testimony that God could give of his holy abhorrence of sin; of his regard to his law; of his determination to support it; and, also, of his great love for his subjects; his great compassion for sinners; and his willingness to suffer himself in their stead; rather, on the one hand, than to punish them, or, on the other, than to set aside the penalty without satisfaction being made to public justice.
6. The atonement may be viewed in either of two points of light.
  - (1.) Christ may be considered as the lawgiver, and attesting his sincerity, love of holiness, hatred of sin, approbation of the law, and compassion for his subjects, by laying down his life as their substitute.

(2.) Or Christ may be considered as the Son of the Supreme Ruler; and then we have the spectacle of a sovereign, giving his only-begotten and well-beloved Son, his greatest treasure, to die a shameful and agonizing death, in testimony of his great compassion for his rebellious subjects, and of his high regard for public justice.

7. The value of the atonement may be estimated, by considering the fact, that it provides for the pardon of sin, in a way that forbids the hope of impunity in any other case. This, the good of the universe imperiously demanded. If sin is to be forgiven at all under the government of God it should be known to be forgiven upon principles that will by no means encourage rebellion, or hold out the least hope of impunity, should rebellion break out in any other part of the universe.

8. The atonement has settled the question, that sin can never be forgiven, under the government of God, simply on account of the repentance of any being. It has demonstrated, that sin can never be forgiven without full satisfaction being made to public justice, and that public justice can never be satisfied with anything less than an atonement made by God himself. Now, as it can never be expected, that the atonement will be repeated, it is for ever settled, that rebellion in any other world than this, can have no hope of impunity. This answers the question so often asked by infidels, "If God was disposed to be merciful, why could he not forgive without an atonement?" The answer is plain; he could not forgive sin, but upon such principles as would for ever preclude the hope of impunity, should rebellion ever break out among free agents in any other part of the universe.

9. From these considerations it is manifest, that the value of the atonement is infinite. We have reason to believe, that Christ, by his atonement, is not only the Saviour of this world, but the Saviour of the universe in an important sense. Rebellion once broke out in heaven, and upon the rebel angels God executed his law, and sent them down to hell. It next broke out in this world; and as the execution of law was found by experience not to be a sufficient preventive of rebellion, there was no certainty that rebellion would not have spread until it had ruined the universe, but for that revelation of God which Christ has made in the atonement. This exhibition of God has proved itself not merely able to prevent rebellion among holy beings, but to reclaim and reform rebels. Millions of rebels have through it been reclaimed and reformed. This world is to be turned back to its allegiance to God, and the blessed atonement of Christ has so unbosomed God before the universe, as, no doubt, not only to save other worlds from going into rebellion, but to save myriads of our already rebellious race from the depths of an eternal hell.

Let us now inquire for whose benefit the atonement was intended.

1. God does all things for himself; that is, he consults his own glory and happiness, as the supreme and most influential reason for all his conduct. This is wise and right in him, because his own glory and happiness are infinitely the greatest good in and to the universe. He made the atonement to satisfy himself. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." God himself, then, was greatly benefited by the atonement: in other

words, his happiness has in a great measure resulted from its contemplation, execution, and results.

2. He made the atonement for the benefit of the universe. All holy beings are, and must be, benefited by it, from its very nature, as it gives them a higher knowledge of God than ever they had before, or ever could have gained in any other way. The atonement is the greatest work that he could have wrought for them, the most blessed, and excellent, and benevolent thing he could have done for them. For this reason, angels are described as desiring to look into the atonement. The inhabitants of heaven are represented as being deeply interested in the work of atonement, and those displays of the character of God that are made in it. The atonement is then no doubt one of the greatest blessings that ever God conferred upon the universe of holy beings.

3. The atonement was made for the benefit particularly of the inhabitants of this world, from its very nature, as it is calculated to benefit all the inhabitants of this world; as it is a most stupendous revelation of God to man. Its nature is adapted to benefit all mankind. All mankind can be pardoned, if they are rightly affected and brought to repentance by it, as well as any part of mankind.

4. The Bible declares that Christ tasted death for every man.

5. All do certainly receive many blessings on account of it. It is probable that, but for the atonement, none of our race, except the first human pair, would ever have had an existence.

6. But for the atonement, it seems not possible for creatures to conceive how man could have been treated with lenity and forbearance any more than the fallen angels could be.

7. All the blessings which mankind enjoy, are conferred on them on account of the atonement of Christ; that is, God could not consistently wait on sinners, and bless, and do all that the nature of the case admits, to save them, were it not for the fact of atonement.

8. That it was made for all mankind, is evident, from the fact that it is offered to all indiscriminately.

9. Sinners are universally condemned for not receiving it.

10. If the atonement is not intended for all mankind, it is impossible for us not to regard God as insincere, in making them the offer of salvation through the atonement.

11. If the atonement were not intended for all, sinners in hell will see and know that their salvation was never possible; that no atonement was made for them; and that God was insincere in offering them salvation.

12. If the atonement is not for all men, no one can know for whom, in particular, it was intended, without direct revelation. Hence--

13. If the atonement was made only for a part, no man can know whether he has a right to embrace it, until by a direct revelation God has made known to him that he is one of that part.

14. If the atonement was made but for a part of mankind, it is entirely nugatory unless a further revelation make known for whom in particular it was made.

15. If it was not made for all men, ministers do not know to whom they should offer it.

16. If ministers do not believe that it was made for all men, they cannot heartily and honestly press its acceptance upon any individual, or congregation in the world; for they cannot assure any individual, or congregation, that there is any atonement for him or them, any more than there is for Satan.

If to this it should be replied, that for fallen angels no atonement has been made, but for some men an atonement has been made, so that it may be true of any individual that it was made for him, and if he will truly believe, he will thereby have the fact revealed, that it was, in fact, made for him: I reply, What is a sinner to believe, as a condition of salvation? Is it merely that an atonement was made for somebody? Is this saving faith? Must he not embrace it, and personally and individually commit himself to it, and to Christ?--trust in it as made for him? But how is he authorized to do this upon the supposition that the atonement was made for some men only, and perhaps for him? Is it saving faith to believe that it was possibly made for him, and by believing this possibility, will he thereby gain the evidence that it was, in fact, made for him? No, he must have the word of God for it, that it was made for him. Nothing else can warrant the casting of his soul upon it. How then is "he truly to believe," or trust in the atonement, until he has the evidence, not merely that it possibly may have been, but that it actually was, made for him? The mere possibility that an atonement has been made for an individual, is no ground of saving faith. What is he to believe? Why, that of which he has proof. But the supposition is, that he has proof only that it is possible that the atonement was made for him. He has a right, then, to believe it possible that Christ died for him. And is this saving faith? No, it is not. What advantage, then, has he over Satan in this respect. Satan knows that the atonement was not made for him; the sinner upon the supposition knows that, possibly, it may have been made for him; but the latter has really no more ground for trust and reliance than the former. He might hope, but he could not rationally believe.

But upon this subject of the extent of the atonement, let the Bible speak for itself: "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world, to condemn the world: but that the world through him might be saved." "And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the

Christ, the Saviour of the world."--John i. 29; iii. 16, 17; iv. 42. "Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."--Rom. v. 18. "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."--2 Cor. v. 14, 15. "Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." "For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe."--1 Tim. ii. 6; iv. 10. "And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."--1 John ii. 2.

That the atonement is sufficient for all men, and, in that sense, general, as opposed to particular, is also evident from the fact, that the invitations and promises of the gospel are addressed to all men, and all are freely offered salvation through Christ. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." --Isa. xlv. 22; lv. 1-3. "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." "Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage."--Matt. xi. 28-30; xxii. 4. "And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready."--Luke xiv. 17. "In the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."--John vii. 37. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me." "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."--Rev. xxii. 17.

Again: I infer that the atonement was made, and is sufficient, for all men, from the fact that God not only invites all, but expostulates with them for not accepting his invitations. "Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: she crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates; in the city she uttereth her words, saying, How long ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you." --Prov. i. 20-23. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."--Isaiah i. 18. "Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go. Oh that thou hadst

hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea."--Isaiah xlvi. 17, 18. "Say unto them, as I, live saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"--Ezek. xxxiii. 11. "Hear ye now what the Lord saith: Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me."--Micah, vi. 1-3. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"--Matt. xxiii. 37.

Again: the same may be inferred from the professed sincerity of God in his invitations. "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!"--Deut. v. 39. "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!"--Deut. xxxii. 29. "For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness; neither shall evil dwell with thee."--Ps. v. 4. "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto him: but their time should have endured for ever." --Ps. lxxxii. 13-15. "O that thou hadst hearkened unto my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea."--Isaiah xlvi. 18. "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye."--Ezek. xviii. 32. "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes."--Luke xix. 41, 42. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."--John iii. 16, 17. "I exhort therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men: for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."--1. Tim. 1-4. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."--2 Peter iii. 9.

Again: the same inference is forced upon us by the fact, that God complains of sinners for rejecting his overtures of mercy: "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded."--Prov. i. 24. "But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in his Spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts. Therefore it is come to pass; that, as he cried and they

would not hear: so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts."--Zechariah vii. 11, 12, 13. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king which made a marriage for his son. And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: and the remnant took his servants, and treated them spitefully, and slew them."--Matthew xxii. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. "And sent his servant at supper-time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife; and therefore I cannot come."--Luke xiv. 17, 18, 19, 20. "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."--John v. 40. "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye."--Acts vii. 51. "And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee."--Acts xxiv. 25.

Again, the same is inferrible from the fact, that sinners are represented as having no excuse for being lost and for not being saved by Christ. "And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment? And he was speechless."--Matt. xxii. 12. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."--Romans i. 20. "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."--John v. 40. "Now, we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."--Romans iii. 19.

## VII. *I now proceed to answer objections.*

1. Objection to the fact of atonement. It is said, that the doctrine of atonement represents God as unmerciful. To this I answer,

(1.) This objection supposes that the atonement was demanded to satisfy retributive instead of public justice.

(2.) The atonement was the exhibition of a merciful disposition. It was because God was disposed to pardon, that he consented to give his own Son to die as the substitute of sinners.

(3.) The atonement is infinitely the most illustrious exhibition of mercy ever made in the universe. The mere pardon of sin, as an act of sovereign mercy, could not have been compared, had it been possible; with the merciful disposition displayed in the atonement itself.

2. It is objected that the atonement is unnecessary.

The testimony of the world and of the consciences of all men is against this objection. This is universally attested by their expiatory sacrifices. These, as has been said, have been offered by nearly every nation of whose religious history we have any reliable account. This shows that human beings are universally conscious of being sinners, and under the government of a sin-hating God; that their intelligence demands either the punishment of sinners, or that a substitute should be offered to public justice; that they all own and have the idea that substitution is conceivable, and hence they offer their sacrifices as expiatory.

A heathen philosopher can answer this objection, and rebuke the folly of him who makes it.

3. It is objected, that the doctrine of the atonement is inconsistent with the idea of mercy and forgiveness.

(1.) This takes for granted, that the atonement was the literal payment of a debt, and that Christ suffered all that was due to all the sinners for whom he died, so that their discharge or pardon is an act of justice, and not of mercy. But this is by no means the view of God which the nature of the atonement presents. The atonement, as we have seen, had respect simply to public, and not at all to retributive justice. Christ suffered what was necessary, to illustrate the intention of God, in respect to sin, and in respect to his law. But the amount of his sufferings had no respect to the amount of punishment that might have justly been inflicted on the wicked.

(2.) The punishment of sinners is just as much deserved by them, as if Christ had not suffered at all.

(3.) Their forgiveness, therefore, is just as much an act of mercy, as if there had been no atonement.

4. It is objected, that it is unjust to punish an innocent being instead of the guilty.

(1.) Yes, it would not only be unjust, but it is impossible with God to punish an innocent moral agent at all. Punishment implies guilt. An innocent being may suffer, but he cannot be punished. Christ voluntarily "suffered the just for the unjust." He had a right to exercise this self-denial; and as it was by his own voluntary consent, no injustice was done to any one.

(2.) If he had no right to make an atonement, he had no right to consult and promote his own happiness and the happiness of others; for it is said, that "for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame."

5. It is objected that the doctrine of atonement is utterly incredible.

To this I have replied in a former lecture; but will here again state, that it would be utterly incredible upon any other supposition, than that God is love. But if God is love, as the Bible expressly affirms that he is, the work of atonement is just what might be expected of him, under the circumstances; and the doctrine of atonement is then the most reasonable doctrine in the universe.

6. It is objected to the doctrine of atonement, that it is of a demoralizing tendency.

(1.) There is a broad distinction between the natural tendency of a thing, and such an abuse of a good thing as to make it the instrument of evil. The best things and doctrines may be, and often are, abused, and their natural tendency perverted.

(2.) Although the doctrine of the atonement may be abused, yet its natural tendency is the direct opposite of demoralizing. Is the manifestation of infinitely disinterested love naturally calculated to beget enmity? Who does not know that the natural tendency of manifested love is to excite love in return?

(3.) Those who have the most cordially believed in the atonement, have exhibited the purest morality that has ever been in this world; while the rejectors of the atonement, almost without exception, exhibit a loose morality. This is, as might be expected, from the very nature and moral influence of atonement.

7. To a *general* atonement, it is objected that the Bible represents Christ as laying down his life for his sheep, or for the elect only, and not for all mankind.

(1.) It does indeed represent Christ as laying down his life for his sheep, and also for all mankind.

1 John ii. 2.--"And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

John iii. 17.--"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."

Heb. ii. 9. "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man."

(2.) Those who object to the general atonement, take substantially the same course to evade this doctrine, that Unitarians do to set aside the doctrine of the Trinity and the Divinity of Christ. They quote those passages that prove the unity of God and the humanity of Christ, and then take it for granted that they have disproved the doctrine of the Trinity and Christ's Divinity. The asserters of limited atonement, in like manner, quote those passages that prove that Christ died for the elect and for his saints, and then take it for granted that he died for none else. To the Unitarian, we reply, we admit the unity of God and the humanity of Christ, and the full meaning of those passages of

scripture which you quote in proof of these doctrines; but we insist that this is not the whole truth, but that there are still other passages which prove the doctrine of the Trinity, and the Divinity of Christ. Just so to the asserters of limited atonement, we reply: we believe that Christ laid down his life for his sheep, as well as you; but we also believe that "he tasted death for every man."

John iii. 16.--"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

8. To the doctrine of general atonement it is objected, that it would be folly in God to provide what he knew would be rejected; and that to suffer Christ to die for those who, he foresaw, would not repent, would be a useless expenditure of the blood and suffering of Christ.

(1.) This objection assumes that the atonement was a literal payment of a debt, which we have seen does not consist with the nature of the atonement.

(2.) If sinners do not accept it, in no view can the atonement be useless, as the great compassion of God, in providing an atonement and offering them mercy, will for ever exalt his character, in the estimation of holy beings, greatly strengthen his government, and therefore benefit the whole universe.

(3.) If all men rejected the atonement, it would, nevertheless, be of infinite value to the universe, as the most glorious revelation of God that was ever made.

9. To the general atonement it is objected, that it implies universal salvation.

It would indeed imply this, upon the supposition that the atonement is the literal payment of a debt. It was upon this view of the atonement, that universalism first took its stand. Universalists taking it for granted, that Christ had paid the debt of those for whom he died, and finding it fully revealed in the Bible that he died for all mankind, naturally, and if this were correct, properly, inferred the doctrine of universal salvation. But we have seen, that this is not the nature of atonement. Therefore, this inference falls to the ground.

10. It is objected that, if the atonement was not a payment of the debt of sinners, but general in its nature, as we have mentioned, it secures the salvation of no one.

It is true, that the atonement, of itself, does not secure the salvation of any one; but the promise and oath of God, that Christ shall have a seed to serve him, provide that security.

#### GENERAL REMARKS ON THE ATONEMENT.

1. The execution of the law of God on rebel angels must have created great awe in heaven.

2. Its action may have tended too much to fear.
3. The forbearance of God toward men previous to the atonement of Christ, may have been designed to counteract the superabundant tendency to fear, as it was the beginning of a revelation of compassion.
4. Sinners will not give up their enmity against God, nor believe that his love is disinterested, until they realize that he actually died as their substitute: the true and heart-belief of this will effectually subdue their enmity.
5. In this is seen the exceeding strength of unbelief, and of prejudice against God.
6. But faith in the atonement of Christ rolls a mountain weight of crushing and melting considerations upon the heart of the sinner.
7. Thus, the blood of Christ, when apprehended and believed in, cleanses from all sin.
8. God's forbearance toward sinners explained by, and consummated in, the atonement, must increase the wonder, admiration, love, and happiness of the universe.
9. The means which he uses to save mankind must produce the same effect.
10. Beyond certain limits, forbearance is no virtue, but would be manifestly injurious, and therefore wrong. A degree of forbearance that might justly create the impression, that God was not infinitely holy and opposed to sin, would work infinite mischief in the universe.
11. When the forbearance of God has fully demonstrated his great love, and done all it can to sustain the moral government of God, without a fresh display of holiness and justice, he will, no doubt, come forth to the consummation of his moral government, and make parallel displays of justice and mercy for ever, by setting heaven and hell in eternal contrast.
12. Then the law and gospel will be seen to be one harmonious system of moral government, developing in the fullest manner the glorious character of God.
13. From this may be seen the indispensable necessity of faith in the atonement of Christ, and the reason why it is, that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation only to every one that believeth. If the atonement is not believed in, it is to that mind no revelation at all, and with such a mind the gospel has no moral power.
14. But the atonement tends, in the highest manner, to produce in the believer the spirit of entire and universal consecration to God.
15. The atonement shows how solid a foundation the saints have for unbroken and eternal repose and confidence in God. If God could make an atonement for men, surely it

is infinitely unreasonable to suppose that he will withhold from those that believe anything which could be to them a real good.

16. We see that selfishness is the great hindrance to the exercise of faith. A selfish mind finds it exceedingly difficult to understand the atonement, inasmuch as it is an exhibition of a state of mind which is the direct opposite of all that the sinner has ever experienced. His experience, being wholly selfish, renders it difficult for him to conceive aright what true religion is, and heartily to believe in the infinitely great and disinterested love of God.

17. The atonement renders pardon consistent with the perfect administration of justice.

18. The atonement, as it was made by the lawgiver, magnifies the law, and renders it infinitely more honourable and influential, than the execution of the penalty upon sinners would have done.

19. It is the highest and most glorious expedient of moral government. It is adding to the influence of law the whole weight of the most moving manifestation of God that men or angels ever saw or ever will see.

20. It completes the circle of governmental motives. It is a filling up of the revelation of God. It is a revealing of a department of his character, with which it would seem that nothing else could have made his creatures acquainted. It is, therefore, the highest possible support of moral government.

21. It greatly glorifies God; indeed it does so far above all his other works and ways.

22. It must be to him a source of the purest, most exalted, and eternal happiness.

23. It opens the channels of divine benevolence to state-criminals.

24. It has united God in a new and peculiar way to human nature.

25. It has opened a way of access to God, never opened to any creatures before.

26. It has abolished natural death, by procuring a universal resurrection: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." 1 Cor. xv. 22.

27. It restores the life of God to the soul, by restoring to man the influence of the Holy Spirit.

28. It has introduced a new method of salvation and of moral renovation, and made Christ the head of the new covenant.

29. It has made Christ our surety: "By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament." Heb. vii. 22.

30. It has arrayed such a public sentiment against rebellion, as to crush it whenever the atonement is fairly understood and applied by the Holy Spirit.

31. It has procured the offer of pardon to all sinners of our race.

32. It has, no doubt, added to the happiness of heaven.

33. It has more fully developed the nature and importance of the government of God.

34. It has more fully developed the nature of sin.

35. It has more fully developed the strength of sin.

36. It has more fully developed the total depravity and utter madness of sinners.

37. It has given scope to the long-suffering and forbearance of God.

38. It has formed a more intimate union between God and man, than between him and any other order of creatures.

39. It has elevated human nature, and the saints of God, into the stations of kings and priests to God.

40. It has opened new fields of usefulness, in which the benevolence of God, angels, and men may luxuriate in doing good.

41. It has developed and fully revealed the doctrine of the Trinity.

42. It has revealed the most influential and only efficacious method of government.

43. It has more fully developed those laws of our being upon which the strength of moral government depends.

44. It has given a standing illustration of the true intent, meaning, and excellency of the law of God. In the atonement God has illustrated the meaning of his law by his own example.

45. The atonement has fully illustrated the nature of virtue, and demonstrated that it consists in disinterested benevolence.

46. It has for ever condemned all selfishness, as entirely and infinitely inconsistent with virtue.