

The Atonement of Christ,

The Conservative Force of the Moral Universe.

A SERMON

By REV. W. JACKSON.

Col. i. 18. 20: "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell; and having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven."

No greater man than the author of these words was ever born of woman. His life is one of the profoundest studies history affords the student. Before he was converted he was of a violent temper, and his depraved powers were driven by a torrent of turbulent impulses. His natural disposition led him to cling to the principles of the Pharisees, the dominant sect of religionists among his countrymen. He was cultured withal, endowed with the gift of eloquence, and well versed in the traditions of his sect. His religion, however, was a destructive zeal, and his anger-fierceness. "He breathed out threatening and slaughter" against the infant Church of Jesus Christ. Such was this man ere grace sanctified and directed his nature.

Behold the change which grace hath wrought! The lion has become a lamb, the Ethiopian, whiter than snow. The hasty, ungovernable Saul has become the gentle and tender Paul. The harsh, cruel, fanatical zealot has become the humble disciple of Jesus, the sympathizing friend and brother of mankind.

His writings are the reflection of his own character. Here we find severity blended with a manly seriousness. Here are sentiments which strike on the intellect like rays of light, and a wealth of pathos which melts the heart. Here is the strength of a giant combined with the sympathy and tenderness of woman, while there is an utter absence of whining and cant. In these remarks you must bear in mind that I take it for granted that he was indebted to the grace and spirit of God for all he was and did as an Apostle or a Christian.

The one thing which distinguished him from his brethren, and that which best enables us to understand his life is the peculiar impression the idea of a universal religion

made on his mind. This idea never so profoundly engrossed any other human soul. In his endeavours to make this idea a fact he spent all his transcendent gifts and graces. Of course this idea was a revelation from God, not the product of his own brain. It was this idea that kindled his enthusiasm, nerved him with exhaustless energy, and strengthened his fortitude and endurance. This was the inspiration of all his travels, sermons, and epistles. The world for Christ, and Christ for the world was the ambition which fired his great soul and kept it continually ablaze.

The letters he addressed to the churches his energies had founded are monuments alike of his greatness of intellect and heart. Many of his words wing us away into the mysteries of the Deity or sink us in the depths of His unmeasureable love. Some of them take us back to the verge of creation, or carry us down the cycles of the unseen and unending future. This text we have to-night is one of the profoundest utterances that ever fell from his lips or leaped from his pen. In its grasp of redemption, in its influence on the destiny of men and angels it stands alone; like the highest peak in a vast range of mountains, its base is on the earth, its top is lost in the clouds of heaven. "Having made peace through the blood of His cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven."

These words contain much doctrinal instruction it will be impossible for us to consider in a single discourse. For instance, underlying these words—the very base on which they rest—is the doctrine of the Incarnation. "A doctrine which in its whole amount," as Bishop Horsley remarks, "is this: that one of the three persons of the Godhead was united to a man, that is, to a human body and a human soul, in the person of Jesus, in order to expiate the guilt of the whole human race, by the death of the man so united to the Godhead." Christ did not cease to be what He before was, God with God; but he became what He before was