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Doctrinal

THOUGHTS ON THE DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT.

NO. II.

In a former number of "the Wesleyan" we offered some remarks on the Redeemer's Atonement for sin, we now purpose to give a few thoughts on its efficacy; in doing so we shall take some scriptural declarations as the foundation of our observations.

1. The atonement purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. There could be no good and peaceful conscience to sinners without the blood of Christ. So long as a holy and perfect Jehovah regards his creatures with displeasure there can be no grounds in any thing they have, for a quiet conscience, and hope of freedom from evil. If God be unreconciled with the sinner, in vain does he persuade himself he shall have peace and pleasure. But if a firm foundation is laid by Jehovah himself for the salvation of sinners;—if all his perfections harmonize with this foundation; if he can pardon the penitential and believing sinner freely and forever, in consequence of a plan exactly suited to bring honour to God and salvation to man;—then none, however guilty and wretched they may have become, need despair of the attainment of a conscience void of offence towards God and mankind. The soul pardoned for the sake of Christ obtains a good conscience. The penitent believer receives an evidence of his Maker's approbation. He loses in the moment of his acceptance with God, the heavy burthen of his guilt. He obtains, power, at the same time, to engage in the service of his Maker; and to triumph over his spiritual foes. He begins to live a new life: it is the life of a new creature. His mind is enlightened, his soul renewed after the Divine likeness, and his conscience is purified. He has different views of himself and his duty to God, from those he entertained when spiritually dead. He no longer falsely estimates things:—no longer puts darkness for light, and light for darkness; no longer does he call evil good, and good evil. He has a good conscience, is willing, desirous, determined to live honestly; to be a child of the light and of the day, and forever to put away the works of darkness, and bear for his defence the whole armour of light.

2. The dead works of our past lives would be an insuperable bar to our serving God if we had no atonement to plead. All the works of mankind done while they are unbelievers, or unregenerated persons,

however specious these works may be, and however connected with apparent virtues and good desires, are no better than dead works, which cannot save mankind from the curse and condemnation pronounced by God on all who have broken his commandments. The criminal convicted of an heinous crime against human laws, forfeits his property, his liberty, his life; and in vain may he desire to have opportunities to do better in time to come: he has lost forever the opportunity he once had of being a good consistent, virtuous member of society, and a public example of just and honourable conduct. He may repent of sin; but the law requires him to suffer for it: he must die. Our condition as sinners against heaven would have been similar to that of the condemned culprit, if we were not permitted to plead the merit of Christ's atoning blood. But this blood gives us advantage over the evil of our past and disobedient lives: pleading this at the throne of grace, the guilt of all past sin is remitted, and removed from our souls: the painful anxieties we endured, on account of the evil of a life dishonouring to God, and hurtful to ourselves, and other men, is exchanged in our hearts for a peace which passeth all understanding—a peace resulting from true faith in the validity of the atonement the Redeemer has made for transgression. There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit: who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? it is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

3. The atonement of Christ affords the most powerful motives and incentives to engage mankind to live a holy life. The doctrines of the Gospel give no licence to licentiousness; nay they have a direct tendency to promote every virtue and excellence in men. The cross of Christ, rightly regarded, has a constraining influence to promote good works, and all holy living. It engages the affections, the passions, as well as the understanding in the service of God. Christ weeping, praying, dying for our salvation, appeals at once to our love, to our shame, to our gratitude,—to our love, and demands a full affection for his immeasurable kindness,—to our shame, for our sins caused his sorrows and death,—to our gratitude, for through his death the gates of heaven are opened for our reception. "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."

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