

took place by his own appointment, was brought about in his own mysterious providence. He prepared the sacrifice, brought it to the altar, and when there, his wrath was the avenging sword that drank the victim's life. Must not the love of God, then, to guilty, to rebellious, man, have been indeed great, when it could give to a cruel death one so dear, nay could itself plunge the knife in his bosom? Must not the love of God have been great, when for objects so unworthy, nay so worthless, nay so deserving the wrath of God, it could not only make the sacrifice, but be itself the hand to inflict the fatal stroke? But such was the love of God to man: such were the obstacles which it surmounted: such was the sacrifice to which it was put; and such, accordingly, is the influential cause of the love of man to God.

Undoubtedly, the way in which God's love found expression enhances infinitely in our view that love itself. Some have entertained the notion that God might have pardoned sin without an atonement, irrespective altogether of the demands of law or justice; might have received the sinner back to his favour on the ground of the penitence of the sinner alone; and either they deny the doctrine of the substitution and death of the son of God, or they think it was altogether unnecessary, was a more laborious and expensive process than was at all required. But even supposing the sinner could truly repent of his sins, of himself, which it were not difficult to shew were impossible, yet, God could never treat with the sinner but on the grounds of the most perfect righteousness, the most absolute justice; and penitence can never be an atonement for sin. Penitence is only sorrow for sin: it is not a vindication of the law of which sin is the transgression. The injury done to the law must be repaired: its unrelaxing demands must be upheld: it is the law, strictly speaking, and not God, which demands the sacrifice. Now, when such was the case, when the law must be vindicated, when sin, if not the sinner, must be condemned, oh! does it not exhibit the love of God in a far stronger light, when, in order that the sinner might be spared, he consented to the substitution of his own son, spared him not, but delivered him up unto the death for us all? Surely, we can appreciate those passages already quoted which represent the love of God in this light, and we can enter somewhat into the views of the apostle when he speaks of

the love of God having a height and a depth, a breadth and a length, which passeth knowledge.

And what, then, we say, might we not expect the effects of such love to be? Must it not be altogether irresistible in its appeal to the heart? Does it not speak in language of the tenderest persuasion? Is it not an overture which only obduracy of the most unpardonable kind can withstand? The hardest heart, harder than the neather millstone, yields to its power, and at length kindles into affection. Gradually, it may be, does it produce its influence; but, at last, and surely, it awakens into animation the long dead flame, the ashes of an affection which, but for this application, would have slumbered for ever, and sunk into darker and blacker hostility.

Let it not be supposed, however, that the love of God can have this effect of itself, or irrespective of the agency of the Holy Ghost. It ought to have this effect; but how comes it that so many continue still the "enemies of God," though they have so often heard of his love, and listened, it may be, to its most melting details? Thousands have been unmelted under it; and thousands more will continue still the "enemies of God" amid its fullest manifestation. They may be told, often and often, that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, gave him to die for us. They may have their own worthlessness and emity set before them, and yet God's unparalleled love described as notwithstanding going out to them from all eternity: they may have the death of Christ represented to them, and the sufferings of his spotless soul, the agonies of the garden and the cross, when God was bruising him, and putting him to grief; but without any effect, except it may be but the transient emotion of the most evanescent sentiment. But let the Spirit accompany the demonstration with his own power: then the impression will be irresistible and the effect will be permanent. Then we shall love God in return: we shall love him with our hearts: we shall "love him, because he first loved us."

But then the Holy Spirit may be said to work in no other way than through the manifestation of God's love. For he takes of the things of Christ and shews them unto the soul. He puts the sinner into a condition to see the love of God in all its true and subduing character.—The truth is, we cannot see the love of God as a real thing, or in all its astonish-

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