

THE ATONEMENT.

There is, in John iii., a two-fold aspect of Christ presented to us, as the object of faith ; through which we do not perish, but have everlasting life. As Son of man, He *must* be lifted up (verses 14, 15) ; as only-begotten Son of God, He is given by the *infinite love* of God (ver. 16).

Many souls stop at the first, the Son of man's meeting the necessity in which men stood as sinners before God, and do not look on to that infinite love of God which gave His only-begotten Son—the love which provided the needed Lamb, the true source of all this work of grace, which stamps on it its true character and effect, and without which it could not be.

Hence such souls have not true peace and liberty with God. Practically for them the love is only in Christ, and God remains a just and unbending Judge. They do not really know Him, the God of love, our Saviour.

Others, alas ! will make of it fatal error ; false as to their own state and God's holiness ; with no true or adequate sense of sin, they reject all true propitiation. The "must be lifted up" has no moral place for them, nothing that the conscience, with a true sense of sin, needs.

The former was one great defect of the Reformation, the other comes of modern infidelity, for such it really is. Alas ! that defect of the Refor-

mation, as a system of doctrine, is the habitual state of many sincere souls now. But it is sad. Righteousness may reign for them with hope ; but it is not grace reigning through righteousness. I repeat, God is not known in His nature of love, nor indeed the present completeness of redemption.

The statement of John iii. begins with the need of man in view of what God is, as indeed it must ; but it gives as the source and result of it for the soul, its measure too in grace, that which was in the heart of God towards a ruined world. As in Hebrews x., to give us boldness to enter into the holiest, the origin is, " Lo ! I come, to do thy will ; " " by the which will we are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all." The offering was the means, but He was accomplishing the will of God in grace, and by the exercise of the same grace in which He came to do it ; for " hereby know we love, that He laid down His life for us." So in Romans v., " God commends His love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." It is summed up in the full saying : " grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord " (Rom. v. 21).

We cannot present too simply the value of Christ's blood, and redemption and forgiveness through it, to the awakened sinner whom that love may have drawn to feel his need ; for by need, and because of need, the sinner must come—it is his only just place before God. The love of God,

and even His love announced in forgiveness through the work of Christ, may, through the power of the Holy Ghost, awaken the sense of need; still, having the forgiveness is another thing. That love, brought home to the soul through grace, produces confidence, not peace; but it does produce confidence. Hence we come into the light. God is light and God is love. Christ in the world was the light of the world, and He was there in divine love. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. When God reveals *Himself*, He *must* be both light and love. The love draws and produces confidence; as with the woman in the city who was a sinner, the prodigal, Peter in the boat. The light shews us our sinfulness. We are before God according to the truth of what He is, and the truth of what we are. But the atonement does more than shew this; it meets, and is the answer to, our case when known. It is the ground through faith, of forgiveness and peace. (See Luke vii. 47-50.) Christ could anticipate His work, and the child of wisdom go in peace. The law may by grace reach the conscience and make us feel our guilt, but it does not reveal God in love. But that love has done what was needed for our sinful state—"Hereby perceive we love, because He laid down His life for us;" "Who was delivered for our offences;" "died for our sins according to the scriptures;" is "the propitiation for our sins;" "set forth as a mercy-seat through faith in His blood," which

“cleanses us from all sin ;” “with His stripes we are healed.” I might multiply passages ; I only now cite these, that the simple basis of the gospel in divine love on the one side, and on the other the work that love has brought to purge our sins, and withal our consciences, so that we may be in peace before a holy God, who is “of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity,” may be simply and fully before us.

We must come as sinners to God, because we are sinners ; and we can only come in virtue of that which, while it is the fruit of God's love, meets according to His holy nature the sins we are guilty of. But then, while it is true that our sins are removed far from us who believe through grace, as they were carried into a land not inhabited by the scapegoat in Israel, yet we have only an incomplete view of the matter in seeing our sins put away. On the great day of atonement (Lev. xvi.) the blood was sprinkled on the mercy-seat and before it, just as (Ex. xii.) it was sprinkled on the lintel and two door-posts to meet God's eye ; “When I see the blood,” He says, “I will pass over.” It was in view of the sin of Israel, but presented to God. The goat whose blood was shed on the great day of atonement, was called “Jehovah's lot.” The blood was carried within ; so it was with the bullock, and with the bullock it was exclusively this. The testimony was there, blessed be God, that as dwellers on the earth our sins have been carried

off where none shall find them; but what characterized the day, was putting the blood on the mercy-seat—presenting it to God. On this day only, too, it was done. In the case of the sin of the congregation, or of the high priest (Lev. iv.), it was sprinkled on the altar outside the veil; but on the great day of atonement alone on the mercy-seat within.

Now, though the sinner must come as guilty, and because of his need, and can come rightly in no other way, as the poor prodigal, and so many other actual cases, yet this does not reach to the full character of propitiation, or atonement, though in fact involving it. The divine glory and nature are in question. In coming, we come by our need and wants; but if we have passed in through the veil, we can contemplate the work of Christ in peace, as viewed in connection with God's nature, though on our part referring to sin. The sins, then, were carried away on the scape-goat, but what God is, was specially in view in the blood carried within the veil. The sins were totally and for ever taken off the believers, and never found; but there was much more in that which did it, and much more even for us. God's character and nature were met in the atonement, and through this we have boldness to enter into the holiest. This distinction appears in the ordinary sacrifices. They were offered on the brazen altar, and the blood sprinkled there. Man's responsibility was the measure of what was

required. His case was met as to guilt ; but if he was to come to God—into His presence—he must be fit for the holiness of that presence.

Not only has Christ borne our sins, but He has perfectly glorified God on the Cross, and the veil is rent, and we have boldness to enter into the holiest. The blood, therefore, of the bullock, and of the goat which was Jehovah's lot, was brought into the holiest. The other goat was the people's lot, this Jehovah's : He was dishonoured by sin ; and Christ the Holy One was made sin for us, was before God according to what God was in His holy and righteous nature.

"Now," says the Lord, "is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him ;" and man entered into the holiest, into heaven itself. Having glorified God in the very place of sin, as made it before God, He enters into that glory on high. Love to God His Father, and absolute obedience at all costs were perfected, when He stood as sin before God. All that God is was glorified here, and here only : His Majesty ;—it became Him to maintain His glory in the moral universe, and thus in bringing many sons to glory, that He should make the Captain of our salvation, perfect through suffering ; His truth was made good ; perfect righteous judgment against sin, yet perfect love to the sinner. Had God cut off man for sin, there was no love ; had He simply for-

given and passed over all sins, there would have been no righteousness. People might have sinned on without its being any matter. There would have been no moral government. Man must have stayed away from God, and misery and allowed sin have had their fling; or he must have been admitted into God's presence in sin, and sin been allowed there; man incapable withal of enjoying God, and, as sensible of good and evil, more miserable than ever.

But in the cross perfect righteousness against sin is displayed and exercised, and infinite love to the sinner. God is glorified in His nature, and salvation to the vilest, and access to God, according to the holiness of that nature, provided for and made good, and this in the knowledge, in the conscious object of it, of the love that had brought it there; a perfect and cleansing work in which that love was known. This, while the sins were put away, could only be by the cross: God revealed in love, God holy and righteous against sin, while the sins of the sinner were put away, his conscience purged, and, by grace, his heart renewed, in the knowledge of a love beyond all his thoughts; himself reconciled to God, and God glorified in all that He is, as He could not else be; perfect access to God in the holiest, where that blood, the testimony to all this, has been presented to God, and the sins gone for ever, according to God's righteousness; while the sinner has the consciousness of being accepted according to the value of that sacrifice, in which

God has been perfectly glorified, so that the glory of God and the sinner's presence there were identified. Angels would learn, and principalities, and powers, what they could learn nowhere else.

And this marks the two parts of propitiation—man's responsibility, and access to God given according to His glory and nature ; in the sins borne, and put away, the scapegoat, God judging evil according to what man ought to be ; and access to God according to what He is. The last specifically *characterises* the Christian ; but the former was necessary, and accomplished for every one that believes ; both by the same work of the cross, but each distinct—judicial dealing, according to man's responsibility, access to God, according to His nature and holiness. The law in itself was the *measure* of the former, the child of Adam's duty ; the nature of God, of the latter, so that we have the infinite blessedness of being with God according to His nature and perfection, partaking of the divine nature, so as to be able to enjoy it, holy, and without blame before Him in love. Of this Christ as man, and we must add, as Son withal, is the measure and perfection ; and let it not be said that, if we partake of this nature, we need not this propitiation and substitution. This can only be said, or supposed, by those who have not got it ; because, if we partake of the divine nature, we judge of sin, in principle, as God does ; we have His mind as to it, and, as upright, of ourselves as in it, and so come, as I have said, first in lowliness

in our need to the cross ; and then, purged in conscience, comprehend the glory of God in it.

These two points, in their general aspect, are clearly presented in Hebrew ix. 26-28 : " Christ appeared once, in the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself ; and as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." It is carried out in application in chapter x., where we have no more conscience of sins, and boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

But this leads us to a still wider bearing of the work of the cross. The whole question of good and evil was brought to an issue there : man in absolute wickedness and hatred against God manifested in goodness and love ; Satan's whole power as prince of this world, and having the power of death ; man in perfect goodness in Christ, obedience and love to His Father, and this in the place of sin as made it, for it was there the need was for God's glory and eternal redemption ; God in perfect righteousness and majesty, and in perfect love. So that all was perfectly settled morally and for ever. The fruits will be only complete in the new heavens and new earth, though the value of that work be now known to faith ; but what is eternal is settled for ever by it, for its value is such, and cannot change.

Propitiation, then, meets our sins through grace, according to God's holy nature, to which it is pre-

sented, and which has been fully glorified in it. It meets the requirements of that nature. Yet is it perfect love to us; love, indeed, only thus known as wrought between Christ and God alone, the only part we had in it being our sins, and the hatred to God which killed Christ.

But it does more, being according to God's nature, and all that this nature is in every respect. It not only judicially meets what is required by reason of our sins, man's failure in duty, and his guilt, but it opens access into the presence of God Himself, known in that nature which has been glorified in it. Love, God in love working unsought, has, through grace, made us love, and we are reconciled to God Himself, according to all that He is, our conscience having been purged according to His glory, so that love may be in unhindered confidence.

Man sits at the right hand of God in virtue of it, and our souls can delight in all that God is, our conscience being made perfect by that which has been wrought. No enfeebling or lowering the holiness of God in His judicial estimate of, and dealing with, sin: on the contrary, all that He is thus glorified; no pleading goodness to make sin light, but God, in the will and love of salvation, met in that judgment and holiness, and the soul brought to walk in the light, as He is in the light, and in the love which is His being and nature, without blame before Him; a perfect conscience, so as to be free before Him, but a purged one,

which has judged of sin as He does, but learned what sin is in the putting of it away. Without the atonement or propitiation of Christ, this is impossible. God is not brought in; it is but human goodness, which drops holiness and overlooks sin, or estimates it according to mere natural conscience. Christ has died, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to *God*.

It is not innocence, for the knowledge of good and evil is there, nor the slighting of God, and an unpurged conscience, nor even the return to the former state of Adam (not knowing good and evil, innocent), but God fully revealed and known in majesty and light and love, and we brought to Him, according to that revelation in perfect peace and joy, by a work done for us which has met and glorified His majesty and light and love in the place of sin, as made it, by Him who knew no sin.

The full result will only be in the new heavens and new earth, the eternal state of blessedness, a condition of happiness not dependent on fulfilling the responsibility in which he who enjoyed it was placed, and in which he failed; but based on a finished work, accomplished to the glory of God, in the very place of ruin, the value of which can never in the nature of things change; it is according to the nature and character of God, it is done and is always what it is, and all is eternally stable. Righteousness, not innocence, dwells in the new heavens and the new earth, not feeble man responsible, but God glorified for evermore. The

result is not all there yet, but we know that the work is done, through the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; and, as believers, accepted in the Beloved, we wait for our portion in the rest when all shall be accomplished.

Judgment is according to man's responsibility, shut out, then, judicially into that exclusion from God into which man has cast himself. Blessing is according to the thoughts and purpose and nature of God, in the exceeding riches of His grace, displayed in our salvation through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, come to bring us into His presence as sons.

Sin and sins were before God in the cross, and propitiation wrought. There sin and sins met God, but in the work of love, according to holiness and righteousness, which brings to God, according to His nature, those who come to Him by it, cleared from them all for ever.



A SOLEMN LESSON AS TO THE PRINCIPLE OF METROPOLITANISM.

JOSHUA XI. (Read vs. 1-13, especially vs. 10-13).

In the beginning of the chapter we find that Israel's victories bring fresh war upon them; but the confederation of their enemies only serves to deliver them all together into their hands. If God will not have peace, it is because He will have victory.

In verses 10-13 a new principle is set before us. God will in nowise allow the world's seat of power to become that of His people; for His people depend exclusively on Him. The natural consequence of taking Hazor would have been to make it the seat of government, and a centre of influence in the government of God; so that this city should be that for God which it had before been for the world: "for Hazor beforetime was the head of all those kingdoms." But it was just the contrary. Hazor is totally destroyed. God will not leave a vestige of former power; He will make all things new. The centre and the source of power must be His, entirely and exclusively His; a very important lesson for His children, if they would preserve their integrity.



Our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body (body of humiliation), that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body (body of glory), according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself. (Phil. iii. 20, 21.)

They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. (John xvii. 16.)

"Every mark of the world is a reproach to him who is heavenly."

MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

(Continued from page 120.)

Deborah and Barak.

(chap. iv.)

Up to this time, God had, in judgment, delivered the unfaithful Israelites into the hands of outside enemies.* A further proof of unfaithfulness on their part, is followed by more serious consequences. Jabin, king of Canaan, reigning in Hazor, with nine hundred chariots of iron, a terrible adversary, conquered Israel and oppressed them. In Joshua xi. we find an ancestor of this very Jabin, with chariots of war and the same capital. In those days Israel understood, under the mighty energy of the Spirit of God, that there could be nothing in common between them and Jabin. They smote him with the edge of the sword, after having burnt his chariots with fire, and they destroyed his capital. Whatever connection could there be between the people of God and the political and military world, whose dominion was to be erased from the map of Canaan? Alas, all is now changed, and Israel, unfaithful, falls under the government of the world. Hazor, their ancient enemy, arises from its ashes, is resuscitated; it is rebuilt within the limits of Canaan, and the people's

*N. B.—I except the Philistines under Shamgar, the short narrative given in ch. iii. 31 being only an episode, as is proved by ch. iv. 1, where the general history is resumed, not at the death of Shamgar but at that of Ehud.

inheritance becomes the kingdom of Jabin! This has its parallel in the history of the church, whose position at the beginning was one of entire separation from the world, consequently there was no thought of the latter being suffered to take any part in the affairs of the assembly. But the carnal state of the assembly at Corinth led one in its midst, who had a matter against another, to go to law before the unjust and not before the saints. (1 Cor. vi.) "Do you not know," said the apostle, "that the saints shall judge the world?" And rebuking them he adds: "I speak to your shame." But what road has the church travelled since then? In reality it is the world that governs the church. "I know," says the Lord to Pergamos, "where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is." (Rev. ii. 13.) Even in the great revival at the Reformation, saints had recourse to the governments of the world, and leant upon them. In the present day there are Christians who, when persecuted, instead of rejoicing to suffer for Christ's sake, claim protection from the powers that be. The judgment on the Hazor of Joshua is no longer anything but a remembrance. Israel served the gods of the Canaanites, having taken their daughters to be their wives and given their daughters to their sons. (iii. 5, 6.) This union bore fruit, and Jabin oppresses the people who, whether they would or not, were forced to endure his rule.

Moreover, this was not the only symptom of Israel's low condition in these inauspicious days.

For if outwardly they were ruled over by their enemy, what was the state of government within? Committed to the hands of a woman! At the outset, as the Word of God teaches us, the oversight of the church locally was committed to elders, appointed for this purpose by the apostles or their delegates, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The order of the assembly, in that which pertained to it locally, fell to their charge. Dropping for a moment man's imitation of this divine institution, would there be any exaggeration in saying that the tendency to entrust government, wholly or partially, into the hands of women is becoming increasingly marked amongst the sects of Christendom in the present day? It is even boasted of, and Christians go so far as to state and seek to prove that such a condition of things is of God, and shews the flourishing state of the church. They quote Deborah in favour of their opinion, but let us see what she was like.

Deborah was a remarkable woman, a woman of faith, one deeply impressed with the humiliating condition of the people of God. She sees that it would be to the *shame* of the leaders in Israel, that God should entrust a post of public activity to a woman in their midst. She says to Barak: "I will surely go with thee; notwithstanding the journey that thou takest *shall not be for thine honour, for* Jehovah shall sell Sisera into the hand of a *woman*." (v. 9.) But, in all her exercise of authority for God, to the confusion of this people

rendered effeminate by sin, Deborah maintains, in circumstances which might have proved a great snare to her, the place assigned by God in His Word to woman. She would not, otherwise, have been a woman of faith. This chapter gives us the history of two women of faith, Deborah and Jael. Each maintains the character in keeping with the position assigned by God to woman. Where does Deborah exercise her authority? Is she seen, as other judges, going in circuit over the land of Israel, or placing herself at the head of the armies? Nothing of the kind; and it is not without reason, it seems to me, that the Word says: "She *dwelt* under the palm tree of Deborah . . . and the children of Israel *came up to her* for judgment." (v. 5.) Prophetess and judge though she was in Israel, she did not step out of the sphere God had assigned to her. Instead of going to Barak, she sent and called him to her where she dwelt.

Barak was a man of God, and accounted by the Word a judge in Israel. "The time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Sampson, and of Jephthae." (Heb. xi. 32) But Barak was a man lacking in character, moral energy and confidence in God. We must not expect in a day of ruin to see all the divine resources displayed in the instruments employed of God.

The labourers are few, but not only so, what little distinctiveness there is on the part of those who have the gifts of the Spirit, how little is their absence felt by Christians. Lack of character

in Barak, made him wish to be the woman's helper, whereas Gen. ii. 18 makes her the helper of the man. He degraded the office in which God had set him, and what was worse, he sought to take Deborah out of her place of dependence as a woman: "If thou wilt go with me, then I will go; but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go." (v. 8.) "I will surely go with thee," she replied. This she could do consistently with her place according to scripture. We read in later times of holy women who accompanied the Lord, becoming His servants in order to minister to His needs. Deborah's act was right, but Barak's motive was wrong, and Deborah rebukes him severely. (v. 9.) What was Barak's motive at bottom? He was willing to depend on God, but not without a human and tangible prop as well. There are many such souls in Christendom. There is, on their part, so little sense of the presence of God, so slight a knowledge of His will, so little decision as to their walk, that, in order to go on in the path of God, they prefer leaning on another to direct dependence on Him only. The counsel of "spiritual directors" is followed, rather than that of the Lord, His Spirit and His Word. What if the leader they follow be mistaken? But God, the Lord, His Spirit, His Word, are infallible! Faithful Deborah does not encourage Barak in this wrong course, and Barak suffers the consequences of his want of faith.

He goes up with his army, and Deborah with

him. Heber, one of the Kenites, of whom we have already spoken in Chap. I., had, in these troublous times, seen fit to sever himself from his tribe, and pitch his tent elsewhere (v. 11). Now "there was peace between Jabin, the king of Hazor, and the house of Heber, the Kenite." (v. 17.)

Heber's act does not seem to have been one of faith. He separated himself from the people in their low estate so as to relieve himself of the responsibility of Israel's sorrowful condition.* Moreover, he was at peace with the avowed enemy of his people; and he had so managed as not to be disquieted by Jabin. But a weak woman dwelt under Heber's tent, who refused safety at such a price, and did not acknowledge an alliance with the enemy of her nation. Israel had undivided possession of her heart. Barak gains the victory, and Deborah, this woman of faith, and mother in Israel, plays no part in it. Sisera's army is defeated; and he himself, forced to flee away on foot, comes to the tent of Jael, where he counts on finding a hospitable shelter. Jael hides him; he asks for a drink of water, and she gives him what was better, milk. She does not treat him at first as an enemy, but with pity; yet in presence of the enemy of her people she becomes pitiless. The instrument she used for Israel's deliverance was even more worthless than Shamgar's, for the only weapons she had were the tools of a woman who keeps the tent; it is with them that she deals the fatal blow

*N. B.—This is more or less the history of all the sects in Christendom.

to the head of the enemy. Jael, like Deborah and every woman of faith, does not go at all beyond her sphere. She carries out her work of vengeance inside her dwelling, with the arms with which the tent supplied her, and gains the victory there ; for women are also called to face the enemy, though it be in the place and with the special weapons assigned to them by God. The faith of these women shines out in this chapter—Jael does not, like Barak, seek a helper ; she depends entirely on the Lord. The secret of her action lies between herself and God. She handles the weapons belonging to her contracted sphere, as skilfully as a man could have done ; for had her hand trembled in the very least, all would have been compromised. Alone (her husband, her natural protector, being absent), but with the Lord, she—one in heart with all the arrayed armies of Israel—fights under her tent. And Deborah in her song can say of her : “ Blessed *above women* shall Jael, the wife of Heber, the Kenite, be ; blessed shall she be above women *in the tent.*” (v. 24.)

With what feelings of humiliation Barak must have gazed on Jael's victory, seeing a woman thus honoured of God, in a path in which he, though leader and judge, had not wished to walk.

All honour to these women ! God made use of them to *arouse* the children of His people to a sense of their responsibility, for once awakened : “ they destroyed Jabin, king of Canaan.” (v. 24.)

(*To be continued, D, V.*)