

**THE SCRIPTURE  
DOCTRINE OF  
THE ATONEMENT**

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The Scripture doctrine of the atonement by David Thom

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**THE ATONEMENT**

BY THE LATE

DAVID THOM, D.D., PH.D.

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## PREFACE.

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THE following pages will be found to contain a mass of scriptural, and consequently to lovers of divine truth, of satisfactory and delightful information, on a subject of all others the most important that can engage human attention.

The Atonement forms the grand peculiarity and glory of the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and to have a clear and correct understanding of it, is as essential to the possession of our own individual peace as Christians, as it is, to an intelligent acquaintance with the entire system of divine revelation of which it forms the central truth.

The work now introduced to public notice is the result of a long life of patient thought, and laborious enquiry, the product of one who felt deeply the importance of the theme on which he has written, and who brought to bear upon it all the powers of a mind, highly gifted by nature, eminently cultivated by profound learning, and above all deeply taught of God.

It is the work of an accomplished and divinely instructed theologian, and presents the clearest statement of the nature, extent, completeness, and glory of the atonement, ever submitted to the world.

It may not for a time occupy that place in the rank of

theological literature which is undeniably its due, but it will ultimately acquire, and having once acquired, it will permanently retain the eminent position it deserves in the standard writings of our country.

The subject of the Atonement has been and still is variously regarded. No theme has probably been more obscured by merely human reasonings, and rendered perplexing and unintelligible by the metaphysical distinctions of scholastic divines.

By many writers on the subject, it has been defined as "a provision in the administration of a government instead of the infliction of punishment on an offender"—as "an expedient that will justify a governor in suspending the execution of the threatened penalty;"\* while by others it has been represented on the principle of commercial transactions:—the Saviour's sufferings constituting the exact equivalent to man's demerit.†

By the former class of writers, the Atonement has been regarded as legislatively designed for the sins of the whole world, but sovereignly made efficacious only in the case of the elect; while by the latter the Saviour has been represented as dying only for believers, the great majority of the human family having their sins unatoned for, and being ultimately consigned to eternal torments to glorify the divine justice.

Indeed among those commonly denominated the orthodox, productions on the subject of the Atonement have scarcely been anything more than the ringing of changes with some

\* See the writings of Drs Magee, Wardlaw, Jenkyn, &c. *passim*.

† See the writings of Dr. Marshall—James Haldane, &c. *passim*.



slight modifications according to the taste of their writers, on the views just presented.

By those not ranged under the banner of orthodoxy—the subject of the Atonement has again been variously regarded, but chiefly as in its effect being wholly moral, that is, as presenting such a manifestation of the love of God as is adapted to subdue the enmity of the human heart, induce filial confidence, and give at once a pattern and a stimulus to self-sacrificing submission to the will of God.

How refreshing to be enabled to turn away from so much that is unsatisfactory—so much that was evidently felt to be unsatisfactory by the writers themselves, to such views as are unfolded in the treatise before us.

To the mind of our author, the Scriptures present as their view of the Atonement, no mere display, no expedient, no sort of commercial arrangement, no make-shift to adjust what had unexpectedly occurred to thwart the plans of the Creator: the whole scheme on the contrary being the result of the purpose which he purposed in himself before the world began.

The Redeemer, it is shewn did not come into the world to interfere with and prevent the execution of the penalty of sufferings and death originally denounced against transgression\*—on the contrary he shews his conviction of the rectitude and suitableness of that penalty by undergoing it himself.

God is not represented as having undergone any change in his views and purposes towards the family of man in consequence of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.—He is not through Christ reconciled unto the world, but he is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.

\* See Gen. iii. 17, 18, 19. Rom. vi. 23.

He does not, as some have represented, punish the innocent *instead* of the guilty, but he shews most impressively the combination of *justice* and *mercy* in man's salvation.

Jesus, assumed a nature which although sinful in us, was rendered sinless by his assumption and purification of it, and this as preliminary to its sacrifice on the cross; and through his essential oneness with us, and by the power of his resurrection, he has transformed the earthly into the heavenly, the creaturely into the divine, the shadowy and figurative into the real and substantial—the old creation for the new.—Divine *justice* is exhibited primarily in inflicting on ordinary human beings sufferings and death, and then in inflicting the same on him who temporally assumed our nature in order to our eternal salvation.

Divine *mercy* is displayed in and through the resurrection of Christ, as having satisfied the claims of justice in his death, we are made alive for evermore.

He takes away sin by taking away the nature that had sinned. He changes and elevates that nature in himself sinless and immortal; and he fully bestows upon us not the nature which Adam originally had, and which was *of the earth, earthy*, but the divine and heavenly nature to which he himself has risen, and which he imparts to us through his oneness with us as *the second man, the Lord from heaven*.

God is exhibited as at once perfectly just and perfectly merciful, the just God, and the Saviour.

Redemption is disclosed, as consisting, not in our being saved from undergoing the consequences of sin, but in our fully undergoing all those consequences and yet being raised to the enjoyment of everlasting life.

The curse originally denounced against sin takes its full effect,

but is in Christ—the head of every man—turned into a blessing. God is true alike to His threatenings and His promises. Not after having made certain demands, is he represented as receding from the strictness of those demands in consequence of the work of Jesus Christ, but his attributes of justice and mercy are exhibited to their fullest extent and in perfect harmony in human salvation.

The Atonement it is seen, owes its entire efficacy to the *divine* nature and character of him by whom it was made. It was the divine person taking hold of human nature—the curse denounced against that nature in consequence of sin attaching to him as having assumed it; and borne by him, and exhausted by him—sin is henceforth swallowed up in divine righteousness, and death in divine life.

And the extent and efficacy of the Atonement are shewn to be *universal*. As the Saviour died for all, so he lives on the behalf of all. The benefit of his death and resurrection so far from being lost by any, all shall ultimately and certainly enjoy: by none shall the purposes of his love be frustrated, he not being overcome of evil but overcoming evil with good.

The temporary and limited reign of sin, is thus, necessarily and delightfully subservient to the unlimited reign of grace through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

To the preparation of this work for the press, a considerable amount of care and attention have been given, and it is devoutly hoped that while its publication may prove a source of interest and profit to all who may peruse its pages, it will be especially acceptable to those who are familiar with the other publications of its revered author, many of whom had the rare privilege of listening to his ministrations and enjoying