

PROFITLATION  
AND SUBSTITUTION.

BY

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## PROPITIATION AND SUBSTITUTION.

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My intercourse with saints, and especially with those who preach, has led me to discover that a good deal of obscurity in their manner of putting the gospel, and I may add a good deal of Arminian and Calvinistic controversy, arises from not distinguishing propitiation and substitution. I am not anxious about the words, but about the practical distinction, which is very simple and, I think, of moment. I say the words, because in propitiation, in a certain sense, Christ

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stood in our stead. Still there is a very real difference in Scripture.

This difference is clearly marked in the offerings of the great day of atonement. Aaron slew the bullock and the goat, which was called the Lord's lot, and sprinkled the blood on and before the mercy-seat and on the altar. The blood was presented to God, whose holy presence had been dishonoured and offended by sin. So Christ has perfectly glorified God in the place of sin, by His perfect obedience and love to His Father, in His being made sin who knew no sin. God's majesty, righteousness, love, truth, all that He is, was glorified in the work wrought by Christ, and of

this the blood was witness in the holy place itself. Our sins gave occasion to it; but God Himself was glorified in it. Hence the testimony can go out to all the world that God is more than satisfied, glorified; and whoever comes by that blood, is freely, fully received of God and to God. But there was no confession of sins on the head of this goat; it was about sin by reason of Israel's sinfulness; but it was simply blood offered to God. Sin had been dealt with in judgment according to God's glory; yea, to the full glorifying of God; for never was His majesty, love, and hatred of sin so seen. God could shine out in favour to the returning sinner ac-

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according to what He was; yea, in the infiniteness of His love, beseech men to return.

But besides this there was personal guilt, positive personal sins for which Israel was responsible, and men are responsible, according to what is righteously required from each. On the great day of atonement, the high priest confessed the people's sins on the scapegoat, laying both his hands on its head; the personal sins were transferred to the goat by one who represented all the people, and they were gone for ever, never found again.

Now this is another thing. Christ is both high priest and victim, and has confessed all the sins of His

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people as His own, borne our sins in His own body on the tree. The two goats are but one Christ; but there is the double aspect of His sacrifice, Godward, and bearing our sins. The blood is the witness of the accomplishment of all, and He is entered in not without blood. He is the propitiation for our sins. But in this aspect the world comes in too. He is a propitiation for the whole world. All has been done that is needed. His blood is available for the vilest, whoever he may be. Hence the gospel to the world says, "Whosoever will, let him come." In this aspect we may say Christ died for all, gave Himself a ransom for all—an *ἀντίλυτρον περὶ*

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πάντων, an adequate and available sacrifice for sin for whoever would come—tasted death for every man.

But when I come to bearing sins, the language is uniformly different. He bore our sins, He bore the sins of many. “All” is carefully abstained from. I say carefully, because in Romans v. 18, 19 the difference is carefully made. The first, our sins, is the language of faith, left open indeed to anyone who can use it; but used and to be used only by faith. The believing remnant of Israel may use it, including the blessing of the nations, for He died for that nation; Christians use it in faith, for all that have faith to use it. The second

“many” restricts it from all, but generally has the force of the many; the *οἱ πολλοί*, as contrasted with a head or leaders, the mass in connection with them. Adam’s *οἱ πολλοί* were in result all; but all as in connection with him. Christ’s *οἱ πολλοί*, those connected with Him. But it will never be found in Scripture that Christ bore the sins of all. Had He done so they never could be mentioned again, nor men judged according to their works. That Christ died for all is, as we have seen, often said. Hence I go with His death to the world as their ground and only ground of approach, with the love shown in it. When a man believes, I can say, Now

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I have more to tell you: Christ has borne every one of your sins; they never can be mentioned again. If we look at the difference of Arminian and Calvinistic preaching, we shall see the bearing of this at once; the Arminians take up Christ's dying for all, and generally they connect the bearing of sins with it, and all is confusion as to the efficacy and effectualness of Christ's bearing our sins, and they deny any special work for His people. They say, If God loved all, He cannot love some particularly; and an uncertain salvation is the result, and man often exalted. Thus the scapegoat is practically set aside.

The Calvinist holds Christ's bearing

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the sins of His people, so that they are effectually saved; but he sees nothing else. He will say, If Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it, there can be no real love for anything else, and denies Christ's dying for all, and the distinctive character of propitiation, and the blood on the mercy-seat. He sees nothing but substitution.

The truth is, Christ is said to love the church, never the world; that is a love of special relationship. God is never said to love the church, but the world. That is divine goodness, what is in the nature of God (not His purpose), and His glory is the real end of all. But I do not dwell

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on this, I only point out the confusion of propitiation and substitution as necessarily making confusion in the gospel, enfeebling the address to the world, or weakening the security of the believer, and in every respect giving uncertainty to the announcement of the truth. I believe earnestness after souls, and preaching Christ with love to Him, will be blessed where there is little clearness, and is more important than great exactitude of statement. Still, it is a comfort to the preacher to have it clear, even if not thinking about it at the moment; and when building up afterwards, the solidness of the foundation is of the greatest moment.

J. N. D.

“NOT BY WORKS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH WE HAVE DONE.”

TITUS iii. 5.

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“BY grace are ye saved, through faith.” It is grace in God that saves us ; but how deeply are we concerned to know that it is through *faith*. How needful it is that we should ever remember this, and the reason given for it in Rom. iv. 16 : “THEREFORE it is of faith, *that it might be BY GRACE.*” How perfect is the wisdom of God’s appointment ! I need continually to be reminded of this faith. Glorious things are spoken of it ; but all are comprised in that one word—“children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” Our thoughts do indeed suggest a something

## 14 *Not by Works of Righteousness.*

to be long-laboured in the chambers of man's heart before we can look upon any as children of God. How different is God's process! "Children of God by *faith-in-Christ-Jesus.*" The reader will notice I join these words together; for faith is nothing without Christ Jesus. *Faith* just means *dependence*; in other words, going out of self to depend *on* Christ Jesus. And then observe, He does not say wise and instructed children, or strong and useful children, but *children*, that's all—a word that gives pledge of instruction and future training. It is the most blessed of all discoveries that we are thus made "*children of God.*" Everything else may bide its time, and find its place. It is enough; *we are children* of God by faith in Christ Jesus. (Gal. iii. 26.)

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