

## CHAPTER VII.

### Our Opponents' Self-Contradictions.

THEY insist that God's remission of sin must be unconditional, the result of simple goodness, and yet none of them, not even the Socinians, dare to promise sinners forgiveness except upon condition of their repentance and reformation. Now, we also hold that these are necessary and meet for the state of the pardoned sinner, but not conditions precedent, not procuring causes of their pardon; they are, in fact, after-consequences and fruits of that blessing. Christ's vicarious sacrifice has already provided its meritorious cause. While our opponents deny this, they yet strictly require repentance and reform, making them forerunners and procurers of pardon. They are thus compelled to teach that the forgiveness of sin is not and cannot be unconditional; and after so stoutly denying that satisfaction to justice is prerequisite to God's mercy upon the guilty, they have to fabricate a species of satisfaction out of these two actions of the guilty man himself. It is true their substitutes are unsuitable; but by this invention they seem to admit that satisfaction for guilt is necessary for the divine honor. This self-contradic-

tion is indeed fated; the common sense and conscience of all men who think predestinated it.

There are no professed Christians on earth who assert so loudly the blessed doctrine that God pardons sin. But what is pardon? Its most common and express name in Scripture is remission; that is, *aphesis*. Now, what is remitted or removed? Not strictly the pardoned man's sin or sinfulness in the sense of his own personal attribute of evilness or opposition to God's holy law; but his guilt, that is to say, his obligation to punishment therefor. Plainly, when Scripture speaks briefly of the *aphesis* of sins, it uses a metonymy, meaning by sins, literally, their guilt; for the consciousness of every pardoned man in the world tells him that his personal attribute of sinfulness has not yet been removed; he tells God this in every confession, thanksgiving, and petition for further grace which his thankful and believing heart offers to his God. Is he lying to him? Let the reader then pardon us for repeating this fundamental distinction, so simple and plain, yet so obstinately overlooked, between sinfulness, the attribute, and guilt, the penal obligation. And let us reaffirm what both Scripture and conscience assert of every pardoned man on earth, that while his guilt is wholly removed, sinfulness remains in him for a time. Now, then, whoever says that God pardons sin has therein said that God actually makes this separa-

tion between the attribute and the obligation, which our opponents say cannot be made at all, because the two are inseparable. They conflict with all the Scripture in asserting that neither Christ nor any other person can be substituted under another's guilt; and their main argument is, as we shall see, that guilt is inseparable from the personal sinfulness which incurred it. But if this were true, all pardon of sinners remaining more or less sinful would be absolutely impossible; and as our opponents and we are all sinners, the only thing left for us is to make up our minds to go together to inevitable perdition, like the lost angels, who have no substitute. Our adversaries seem to think that it is more reasonable our obligations should be transferred nowhere else than to somewhere else.

If the Redeemer did not suffer for our sins, that is, for the guilt of them, he must have suffered for something, and that a very grand object. Our opponents, of all men, are bound to teach this; for they say God's whole essence is love, by which they mean benevolence; therefore causeless sufferings in his children must be more obnoxious to his feelings than any other thing in the world. Moreover, since Jesus is perfect in the Father's eyes, his causeless sufferings must have been most obnoxious to him of all; they were, moreover, terrible and extraordinary in severity, worse than were ever endured by any innocent

child of God. Therefore they must have had an object, and that of the grandest importance. What was it? Our adversaries are not agreed between themselves in their answer. One set say that God's object was to give conclusive weight to Jesus' testimony for this truth, namely, that God certainly pardons sin on the ground of the sinner's repentance and reform; for when a man dies a martyr for his teaching, men are obliged to believe that it was true. Another set say that the object of Jesus' innocent sufferings and death was designed to add moral weight to his example as our pattern, especially in practicing the virtues of truth, moral courage, patience, and fortitude under calamity. Still another set hold that the object was to soften and melt our hearts by sympathy with his sufferings; and yet another, that God's object in the sacrifice of Christ was to make a dramatic display of his opposition to sin, even while pardoning the sinner, and so to prevent men's presuming too much upon his kindness. When we are taught that these are ends designed and secured through Christ's death, we respond, yes, they are secondary ends; but in order that they may be such, they must be grounded in the great truth that he suffered legally and righteously for the guilt of sin imputed to him. Take away that foundation, and these purposes of Christ's sufferings become inexplicable and worse than futile. We can reasonably

assert all these as secondary results of the divine sacrifice ; in the scheme of our opponents they are contradictions and folly. First, the martyr's willing death does not prove the truth of his creed, but only his sincerity in it, perhaps even his stubborn pride in it, unless we know that he possesses infallible and divine wisdom ; second, Did God's providence permit and order the calamities and death of Jesus ? If the Father took no providential note of or concern in the destiny of such a Son, at once the most admirable and the most important figure in human history, there is not a shadow left of proof that there is any providence over persons as insignificant as we are. This conclusion is to us practical atheism. If Providence did ordain the sufferings of Jesus, while he bore no guilt, then the case which we have is this : That God punished, or intentionally permitted the punishment of *the* one man of purest and sublimest virtue who ever appeared on earth with miseries more dire than he ever visited upon a Cain or a Judas. What lesson of patience or fortitude under suffering does this contain for us ? It would be only a lesson of hatred against the government we live under, and of horror and despair. And last : the gratuitous sufferings of Jesus would remain a dramatic exhibition of God's hatred of innocence and virtue rather than of vice. But if the great truth be posited that a just ground was laid by Christ's

voluntary substitution under the guilt of a world for these penal sufferings, and that by them God's purity, adorable justice, and infinite love for the unworthy are gloriously manifested together, then all these moral and didactic effects of Christ's sacrifice most truly result.

From these deadly paradoxes there are but two evasions. One is to say that God's providence had nothing to do with the calamities and the murder of Jesus; the other, that earthly miseries and death are not penalties for sin. The latter is the evasion of the old Pelagians when pressed by Augustine with the inexorable fact that infants, whom they pronounced sinless, meet with the same bodily evils and death with adult sinners. Let us see at what cost either of these evasions must be adopted. It has already been pointed out that, if Providence intervenes anywhere in human affairs, it certainly did so in the life and destiny of Jesus, because his is the most illustrious and important figure that has ever appeared among mankind, and because his career has already had more influence on human history than anything else ever done on earth. And this is a just argument *ad hominem*, because all these rationalists adopt this theory of providence: that God concerns himself therein with cardinal and influential events, but not with the ordinary current of effects arising out of common second causes. Therefore, he who denies a pro-

vidence over the destiny of Jesus must logically deny providence everywhere; and that, we repeat, is *practical atheism*; moreover, it is virtual infidelity. He who takes that position should flout the authority of all Scripture, because God's concern in the sufferings and death of Jesus is taught as expressly and as widely as any proposition in the Bible. There is no way to get rid of it except by trampling the authority of Scripture under foot. In Psalm xxii. it is, beyond all doubt, the Messiah who speaks through the mouth of David (verses 1, 15): "My God, my God, why hast *thou forsaken me?*" (the very words of Jesus on the cross), and "*thou hast brought me into the dust of death.*" Isaiah liii. 6: "*The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*" Luke xxiv. 46: It is Jesus himself who said to his apostles, "*Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead.*" John xix. 11: "Thou couldst have no power at all against me, *except it were given thee from above.*" Acts ii. 23: Christ was "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." Romans viii. 32: God "spared not his own Son, but *delivered him up for us all.*"

It is equally contrary to Scripture to say that any human sufferings and death are other than penal. Genesis ii. 17: "For in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Genesis iii. 17, 19: "Because thou hast hearkened unto the

voice of thy wife, . . . . . cursed is the ground for thy sake. . . . . For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Romans v. 12: "Death passed upon all men, *for that all have sinned*"; and vi. 23: "The wages of sin is death." The very benevolence of God, on which our opponents boast so much, proves that all human miseries and death must be just penalties for sin, and cannot be otherwise explained; for it is proved that they are permitted and disposed by God according to his purpose. Did he not do this at the prompting of his own justice, his infinite benevolence would forbid his doing it at all. Surely there cannot be a sharper self-contradiction than that of the men who say, in one breath, that God's perfect justice makes it impossible that he should inflict vicarious sufferings for guilt upon the voluntary substitute who is innocent; and in the next breath, that God is capable of inflicting similar penal evils upon multitudes of others, without reference to their guilt.

This, then, is the word which common sense and honesty would speak to all our opponents: You say that you know intuitively and necessarily that there cannot be penal substitution of the innocent for the guilty under God's just government. Then cease to call yourselves Christians of any phase, degree, or sect; repudiate the Bible at once and wholly. Let the world know where you stand as

simple infidels, like Chubb, Toland, Tom Paine, Voltaire, and Ingersoll. Consistency leaves you no other position, no middle ground; for the Bible is too deeply committed to the doctrine which you disdain, to be any rule of faith at all, if you are right.