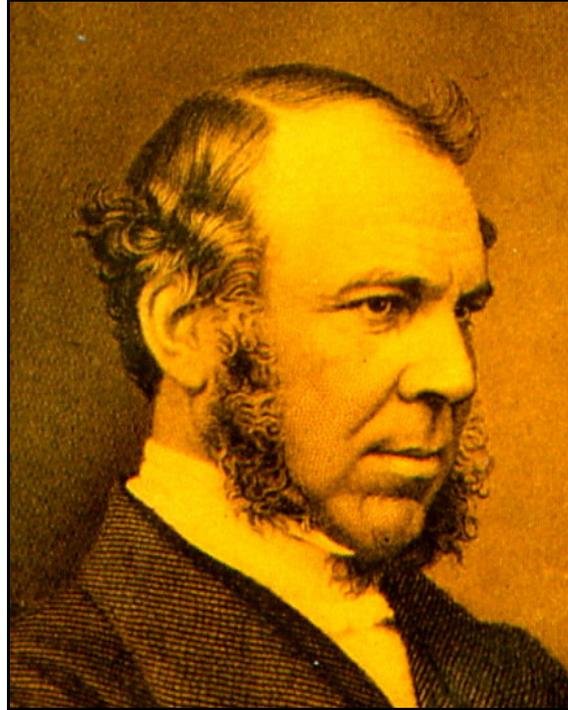


RYLE ON REDEMPTION

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*The Gospel According to
John Charles Ryle*



Compiled & Edited
by
Dr Alan C. Clifford

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Distinct from his devotional comments, this work consists of doctrinal extracts from J. C. Ryle's *Expository Thoughts on the Gospel of John* (The Banner of Truth Trust). They reveal his views on the Gospel of Jesus Christ, especially on the extent of the atonement and related doctrines of the Reformed Faith. *Note:* It is a strange fact that the Banner of Truth Trust also publish several works on 'limited atonement'—including John Owen's *Death of Death*—with which Ryle would vigorously disagree. This publication explains why.

As used by the author, the text of the Authorized Version of the Bible has been retained.

I will give place to no one in maintaining that Jesus loves all mankind, came into the world for all, died for all, provided redemption sufficient for all, calls on all, invites all, commands all to repent and believe; and ought to be offered to all—freely, fully, unreservedly, directly, unconditionally—without money and without price. If I did not hold this, I dare not get into a pulpit, and I should not understand how to preach the Gospel.

J. C. Ryle

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Summary

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900), the first Bishop of Liverpool is undoubtedly the greatest English churchman of the 19th century. Above all, he was a faithful expositor of the Protestant Evangelical Faith. Steering a Bible-based middle course between Arminianism and Owenite 'High' Calvinism, he warned against a rationalistic exegesis of Holy Scripture: "I have long come to the conclusion that men may be more systematic in their statements than the Bible, and may be led into grave error by idolatrous veneration of a system."

It is undoubtedly anomalous that a number of Anglican theologians including J. I. Packer and, more recently, Lee Gatiss and others have opted for the 'high orthodoxy' of the Puritan John Owen, especially where the extent of Christ's atonement is concerned. Judging by his *Expository Thoughts*, Ryle would argue that they are at odds not only with the Scriptures but also with historic Anglican orthodoxy. This publication demonstrates Ryle's biblical balance in expounding the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Introduction

Appointed as the first Bishop of Liverpool in 1880, J. C. Ryle (1816-1900) needs no introduction to those unashamed to be known as Protestant and Evangelical. Among Nonconformists who dissent from his views on church order and baptism, many of his writings have always been valued. Even the Baptist C. H. Spurgeon described Ryle as 'the best man in the Church of England'.

In his earlier years at Helmingham and Stradbroke in Suffolk, Ryle authored the much-loved *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* and the well-known *Christian Leaders of the Eighteenth Century*. Among other works, *Light from Old Times* came from his pen a decade after moving to Merseyside. In all his productions, it is evident that, besides honouring the Protestant legacy of the Church of England, Ryle was determined to be faithful to Holy Scripture. Nowhere was this more the case than when he expounded the Gospel.

Long before Ryle's time, the precise nature of Gospel truth had been discussed and debated by numerous theologians and pastors. Indeed, the controversies over Calvinism and Arminianism had left a trail of debris by the time Ryle commenced his ministry. Election or free will, limited or universal atonement, these and related subjects were issues stretching back to the time of the Protestant Reformation. At a time when John Wesley's Arminianism and John Owen's Calvinism had divided the evangelical world, J. C. Ryle became persuaded that Bible truth demanded a 'middle way' between the fiercely contested alternatives. He also believed that the doctrinal standards of the Church of England—the Thirty-nine Articles, the Book of Common Prayer (including the Catechism) and the Homilies—bore witness to this 'middle way' between the later 'high' orthodoxy of the Westminster Confession of Faith and the over-reactionary tenets of Wesleyan Arminianism.

It is undoubtedly anomalous that a number of Anglican theologians including J. I. Packer and, more recently, Lee Gatiss *et al* have opted for the 'high orthodoxy' of the Puritan John Owen, especially where the extent of Christ's atonement is

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concerned. Judging by his *Expository Thoughts*, Ryle would argue that they are at odds not only with the Scriptures but also with historic Anglican orthodoxy.

Judging by evidence which is both compelling and embarrassing, it is not difficult to vindicate Ryle's position. Article XXXI explicitly affirms that 'The offering of Christ once made is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction, for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual;...' Consistent with this, the prayer of consecration from the BCP service of Holy Communion states that Christ made 'a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world'. The Catechism teaches the catechumen to believe that God the Son 'hath redeemed me, and all mankind' while it hastens to add, in Calvinist rather than Arminian fashion, that God the Holy Ghost 'sanctifieth me, and all the elect people of God'. The Homily for Good Friday is equally clear: 'So pleasant was this sacrifice and oblation of His Son's death, which he so obediently and innocently suffered, that he would take it for the only and full amends for all the sins of the world'.

Despite the seeming popularity of 'Anglican Owenism', Ryle could claim an honourable theological legacy. Besides the vast majority of such Anglican reformers as Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley and Hooper, later divines such as John Davenant, Richard Baxter, John Newton and Charles Simeon anticipated his gospel understanding. The following extracts from the doctrinal notes in Ryle's *Expository Thoughts on John's Gospel* surely demonstrate his conformity to biblical truth and the deviance of others who claim to function within the historic Anglican evangelical context.

Consistent with my own convictions, while I do not endorse Bishop Ryle's episcopal churchmanship, I am happy to affirm his understanding of the Gospel. As the notes will indicate, the great John Calvin would say the same! In this respect, I believe the 'Packerian' outlook is doubly invalid. The following material is presented in the hope that the true Gospel of 'authentic Calvinism' might prevail against the unbalanced unbiblical alternatives that have plagued Christian witness for too long.

Dr Alan C. Clifford

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I

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world (John 1: 29).

[*Behold*] This appears to have been a public, open proclamation made by John to his disciples and the multitude who surrounded him. "Behold that person who is coming towards us. He is the Lamb of God, the Messiah of whom I have been preaching to you, and on whom I have told you to believe."

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[*The Lamb of God,*] There can be no reasonable doubt that John gave this name to our Lord because He was the true sacrifice for sin, the true antitype of the passover lamb, and the lamb prophesied of by Isaiah, (Is. liii. 7.) The idea that he only refers to the quietness and meekness of our Lord's personal character is utterly unsatisfactory. He is describing our Lord's official character as the great propitiation for sin.

The expression, "Lamb of God," according to some, signifies "that eminent, great, divine, and -most excellent Lamb." It is a well-known Hebraism to describe anything very great as a thing "of God." Thus we read of "thunderings of God," and "trembling of God" (Ex. ix. 28; 1 Sam. xiv. 15.)—According to others it signifies the Lamb which God has provided from all eternity, and which God has long covenanted and promised to send into the world to be slain for sinners. Both views make good doctrine, but the second seems the preferable one.

Bengel thinks that John called our Lord "the Lamb of God," with a special reference to the Passover, which was then near. (John ii. 13) He also sees a parallel between the expression "Lamb of God," and the phrase, "sacrifice of God" (Psalm ii. 17), which means "the Sacrifice which God acknowledges as pleasing to Him."

Chemnitius thinks, in addition to other reasons why John calls our Lord "the Lamb," that he desired to show that Christ's kingdom was not political. He was neither the ram, nor the he-goat described in Daniel. (Dan. viii. 20.)

[*Taketh away*] The Greek word so rendered, is given in the marginal reading, "beareth," Both ideas are included. It means "taketh away by his expiatory death." The Lamb of God "beareth" the sin of the world by taking it upon Himself. He allowed our guilt to be laid upon Him, and carried it away like the scape goat, so that there was none left. It is one of the many expressions which describe the great Scripture truth, that Christ's death was a vicarious sacrifice for sin. He became our substitute. He took upon Him our sin. He was made sin for us. Our sins were imputed to Him. He was made a curse for us.

The word here rendered "taketh away" is found at least 100 times in the New Testament. In 82 places it is rendered, "take,"—"take up,"—"take away." In 5 places it is, "bear." In 4 it is, "lift up." In 2 it is, "remove." In most of the other places it is the imperative expression, "away with!" All point to the same view of the text before us: viz., "a complete atonement for sin."

The use of the present tense, "taketh away," is remarked by all the best commentators, ancient and modern. It is intended to show the completeness of Christ's satisfaction for sin, and the continual application of His once-made sacrifice. He is always taking sin away. Rollock observes, "The influence of Christ's sacrifice is perpetual, and His blood never dries up."

The idea maintained by some, that "taking away sin," in this place, includes sanctification as well as justification, seems to me quite untenable. That Christ "takes away" the power of a believer's sins, when He applies His redemption to his soul, is no doubt true. But it is not the truth of this text.

[*The sin*] Let it be noted that the singular number is used here. It is "the

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sin," not "the sins." The expression seems to me purposely intended to show that what Christ took away, and bore on the cross, was not the sin of certain people only, but the whole accumulated mass of all the sins of all the children of Adam. He bore the weight of all, and made an atonement sufficient to make satisfaction for all. The idea propounded by some, that "the sin" which Christ is said here to take away, is only man's original sin, and that for man's actual sins each man must make satisfaction himself, is destitute of the slightest foundation in Scripture, contradicts scores of plain texts, and utterly overthrows the whole Gospel.

[*Of the world.*] It is almost needless to say that there are two views of this expression. Some say that it only means that Christ takes away the sin of Gentiles as well as Jews, and that it does not mean the sin of any but the elect. Others say that it really means that Christ "taketh away" the sin of all mankind; that is, that He made an atonement sufficient for all, and that all are salvageable, though not all saved, in consequence of His death.

I decidedly prefer the latter of these two views. I hold as strongly as any one, that Christ's death is profitable to none but to the elect who believe in His name. But I dare not limit and pare down such expressions as the one before us. I dare not say that no atonement has been made, in any sense, except for the elect. I believe it is possible to be more systematic than the Bible in our statements. When I read that the wicked who are lost, "deny the Lord that bought them" (2 Peter ii. 1), and that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor. v. 19), I dare not confine the intention of redemption to the saints alone. Christ is for every man.

I am aware the objection is often made, that "if Christ taketh away the sin of the world, and yet the vast majority of men die in their sins and are lost, Christ's work for many was wrought in vain." I see no force in this objection. I think we might as well argue, that because sin came into the world and marred creation, creation was in vain. We are not talking of the works of men, but of the eternal Word, and we must be content to see much in His works that we do not entirely understand.

Though multitudes are lost, I have no doubt the last day will prove that nothing that Christ did for them was in vain. I rest in the view of the text, that in some ineffable and inscrutable way, the whole world's sin was borne and atoned for by Christ. "He taketh away, or makes atonement for the sin of all the men and women in the world." I have no doubt, from Scripture, that the vast majority of "the world's" inhabitants will be found at last to have received no benefit from Christ, and to have died in their sins. I repudiate the idea of universal salvation, as a dangerous heresy, and utterly contrary to Scripture. But the lost will not prove to be lost because Christ did nothing for them. He bore their sins, He carried their transgressions, He provided payment; but they would not put in their claim to any interest in it. He set the prison door open to all; but the majority would not come out and be free. In the work of the Father in election, and of the Spirit in conversion, I see limitation in the Bible most clearly. But in the work of Christ in atonement I see no limitation.

The atonement was made for all the world, though it is applied to and enjoyed by none but believers. Christ's intercession is the peculiar privilege of His people. But Christ's atonement is a benefit which is offered freely and

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honestly to all mankind. In saying all this I am fully aware that the word "world" is sometimes used in a qualified sense, and must be interpreted with some limitation. When it is said, "The world knew Him not" (John i. 10), it cannot mean that not a single person in the world knew Him. But in the text before us I see no necessity for limitation. I see the whole mass of mankind's guilt brought together in one singular word, "the sin of the world," and that sin, I am told, Christ "taketh away." And I believe the true meaning to be, that the Lamb of God has made atonement sufficient for all mankind, though efficient unquestionably to none but believers.

Augustine remarks, "How weighty must be the blood of the Lamb, by whom the world was made, to turn the scale when weighed against the world!"

Calvin, in his commentary on this verse, says, "John uses the word sin in the singular number for any kind of iniquity; as if he had said that every kind of unrighteousness which alienates men from God is taken away by Christ. And when he says 'The sin of the world,' he extends this favour indiscriminately to the whole human race, that the Jews might not think that He had been sent to them alone. Hence we infer that the whole world is involved in the same condemnation; and that as all men, without exception, are guilty of unrighteousness before God, they need to be reconciled to Him. John the Baptist, by speaking generally of the sin of the world, intended to impress upon us the conviction of our own misery, and to exhort us to seek the remedy. Now our duty is to embrace the benefit which is offered to all, that each of us may be convinced that there is nothing to hinder him from obtaining reconciliation in Christ, provided that he comes to Him by the guidance of faith."

Brentius says, "Although all the men in the world do not receive the benefit of Christ's passion, because all do not believe on Christ, yet that benefit is so offered to the whole world, that whosoever, whether circumcised or uncircumcised, king or peasant, high or low, rich or poor, sick or well, old or young, receives Christ by faith, is justified before God, and saved with an eternal salvation."

Musculus says, "John places before us no one particular person whose sins the Lamb has come to take away; but under the expression the 'world,' he comprehends the whole race of mortals from the very beginning of the world to the end of it."

Melanchthon says, "He taketh away the sin, that is the universal condemnation, of the human race."

Chemnitius says, John affirms that the benefits of Christ belong not to the Jews only, but to the whole world, and that no one who is in the world is excluded from them, if he is only willing to receive them by faith."

The deep spiritual knowledge exhibited by John the Baptist in this verse, ought not to be overlooked. Such a sentence as the one before us never fell from the lips of any other disciple of Christ before the day of Pentecost. Others could say that our Lord was the Christ, the Son of God, the Messiah, the Son of David, the King of Israel, the Son of the Blessed, who was to come into the world. But none seem to have seen so clearly as John that Christ was the sacrifice for sin, the Lamb that was to be slain. Well would it be for

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the Church of Christ in the nineteenth century, if all its ministers possessed as much knowledge of Christ's atonement as is here shown by John the Baptist! John saw the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, before He died on the cross. Many so-called Christians cannot see Christ's vicarious sacrifice even at this day!

II

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3: 16).

A more wonderful verse is not to be found in the Bible! That God should love such a wicked world as this, and not hate it,—that He should love it so as to provide salvation,—that in order to provide salvation He should give, not an angel, or any created being, but such a priceless gift as His only-begotten Son,—that this great salvation should be freely offered to every one that believeth,—all, all this is wonderful indeed! This was indeed a "heavenly thing."

The words, "God loved the world," have received two very different interpretations. The importance of the subject in the present day makes it desirable to state both views fully.

Some think, as Hutcheson, Lampe, and Gill, that the "world" here means God's elect out of every nation, whether Jews or Gentiles, and that the "love" with which God is said to love them is that eternal love with which the elect were loved before creation began, and by which their calling, justification, preservation and final salvation are completely secured.—This view, though supported by many and great divines, does not appear to me to be our Lord's meaning. For one thing, it seems to me a violent straining of language to confine the word "world" to the elect. "The world" is undoubtedly a name sometimes given to the "wicked" exclusively. But I cannot see that it is a name ever given to the saints.—For another thing, to interpret the word "world" of the elect only is to ignore the distinction which, to my eyes, is plainly drawn in the text between the whole of mankind and those out of mankind who "believe." If the "world" means only the believing portion of mankind, it would have been quite enough to say, "God so loved the world, that he gave His only-begotten Son, that the world should not perish." But our Lord does not say so. He says, "that whosoever believeth: i.e., that whosoever out of the world believeth."—Lastly, to confine God's love to the elect, is taking a harsh and narrow view of God's character, and fairly lays Christianity open to the modern charges brought against it as cruel and unjust to the ungodly. If God takes no thought for any but His elect, and cares for none beside, how shall God judge the world?—I believe in the electing love of God the Father as strongly as any one. I regard the special love with which God loves the sheep whom He has given to Christ from all eternity, as a most blessed and comfortable truth, and one most cheering and profitable to believers. I only say, that it is not the truth of this text.

The true view of the words, "God loved the world," I believe to be this. The

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"world" means the whole race of mankind, both saints and sinners, without any exception. The word, in my opinion, is so used in John i. 10, 29; vi. 33, 51; viii. 12; Rom. iii. 19; 2 Cor. v. 19; 1 John ii, 2; iv. 14. The "love" spoken of is that love of pity and compassion with which God regards all His creatures, and specially regards mankind. It is the same feeling of "love" which appears in Psalm cxlv. 9, Ezek. miii. 11, John vi. 32, Titus iii. 4, 1 John iv. 10, 2 Pet. iii. 9, 1 Tim. ii. 4. It is a love unquestionably distinct and separate from the special love with which God regards His saints. It is a love of pity and not of approbation or complaisance. But it is not the less a real love. It is a love which clears God of injustice in judging the world.

I am quite familiar with the objections commonly brought against the theory I have just propounded. I find no weight in them, and am not careful to answer them. Those who confine God's love exclusively to the elect appear to me to take a narrow and contracted view of God's character and attributes. They refuse to God that attribute of compassion with which even an earthly father can regard a profligate son, and can offer to him pardon, even though his compassion is despised and his offers refused. I have long come to the conclusion that men may be more systematic in their statements than the Bible, and may be led into grave error by idolatrous veneration of a system. The following quotations from one whom for convenience sake I must call a thorough Calvinist, I mean Bishop Davenant, will show that the view I advocate is not new.

"The general love of God toward mankind is so clearly testified in Holy Scripture, and so demonstrated by the manifold effects of God's goodness and mercy extended to every particular man in this world, that to doubt thereof were infidelity, and to deny it plain blasphemy."—*Davenant's Answer to Hoard*, p. 1.

"God hateth nothing which Himself created. And yet it is most true that He hateth sin in any creature, and hateth the creature infected with sin, in such manner as hatred may be attributed to God, But for all this He so generally loved mankind, fallen in Adam, that He hath given His only begotten Son, that what sinner soever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. And this everlasting life is so provided for man by God, that no decrees of His can bring any man thither without faith and repentance; and no decrees of His can keep any man out who repenteth and believeth. As for the measure of God's love exhibited in the external effect unto man, it must not be denied that God poureth out His grace more abundantly on some men than on others, and worketh more powerfully and effectually in the hearts of some men than of others, and that out of His alone will and pleasure. But yet, when this more special love is not extended, His less special love is not restrained to outward and temporal mercies, but reacheth to internal and spiritual blessings, even such as will bring men to an eternal blessedness, if their voluntary wickedness hinders not."—*Davenant's Answer to Hoard*, p.469.

"No divine of the Reformed Church, of sound judgment, will deny a general intention or appointment concerning the salvation of all men individually by the death of Christ, on the condition if they should believe. For the intention or appointment of God is general, and is plainly revealed in holy Scripture, although the absolute and not to be frustrated intention of God concerning the gift of faith and eternal life to some persons, is special, and limited to

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the elect alone.—So I have maintained and do maintain."—*Davenant's Opinion on the Gallican Controversy.*

Calvin observes on this text, "Christ brought life, because the heavenly Father loves the human race, and wishes that they should not perish." Again he says, "Christ employed the universal term whosoever, both to invite indiscriminately all to partake of life, and to cut off every excuse from unbelievers. Such also is the import of the term world. Though there is nothing in the world that is worthy of God's favour, yet He shows Himself to be reconciled to the whole world, when He invites all men without exception to the faith of Christ"

The same view of God's "love" and the "world," in this text, is taken by Brentius, Bucer, Calovius, Glassius, Chemnitius, Musculus, Bullinger, Bengel, Nifanius, Dyke, Scott, Henry, and Manton,

The little word "so," in this verse, has called forth many remarks, on account of its depth of meaning. It doubtless signifies "so greatly, so much, so dearly." Bishop Sanderson, quoted by Ford, observes, "How much that 'so' containeth, no tongue or wit of man can reach: nothing expresseth it better to the life, than the work itself doth."

[*That He gave His only-begotten Son*] The gift of Christ, be it here noted, is the result of God's love to the world, and not the cause. To say that God loves us because Christ died for us, is wretched theology indeed. But to say that Christ came into the world in consequence of the love of God, is scriptural truth.

The expression, "He gave," is a remarkable one. Christ is God the Father's gift to a lost and sinful world. He was given generally to be the Saviour, the Redeemer, the Friend of sinners,—to make an atonement sufficient for all,—and to provide a redemption large enough for all. To effect this, the Father freely gave Him up to be despised, rejected, mocked, crucified, and counted guilty and accursed for our sakes. It is written that He was "delivered for our offences," and that "God spared Him not, but delivered Him up for us all." (Rom. iv. 25; viii. 32.) Christ is the "gift of God," spoken of to the Samaritan woman (John. iv. 10), and the "unspeakable gift" spoken of by St. Paul. (2 Cor. ix, 15.) He Himself says to the wicked Jews, "My Father *giveth* you the true bread from heaven." (John vi. 32.) This last text, be it noted, was one with which Erskine silenced the General Assembly in Scotland, when he was accused of offering Christ too freely to sinners.

It should be observed that our Lord calls Himself "the only-begotten Son of God" in this verse. In the verse but one before this, He called Himself the "Son of man." Both the names were used in order to impress upon the mind of Nicodemus the two natures of Messiah. He was not only the Son of man but the Son of God. But it is striking to remark that precisely the same words are used in both places about faith in Christ. If we would be saved, we must believe in Him both as the Son of man and the Son of God.

[*That whosoever believeth, etc....life.*] These words are exactly the same as those in the preceding verse. Why our translators should have rendered the same Greek word by "everlasting" in one place, and "eternal" in the other, it is hard to say. In Matt. xxv. 46, they did just the same.

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The repetition of this glorious saying, "whosoever believeth," is very instructive. For one thing it serves to show that mighty and broad as is the love of God, it will prove useless to every one who does not believe in Christ. God loves all the world, but God will save none in the world who refuse to believe in His only-begotten Son.--For another thing it shows us the great point to which every Christian should direct his attention. He must see to it that he believes on Christ. It is mere waste of time to be constantly asking ourselves whether God loves us, and whether Christ died for us; and it argues gross ignorance of Scripture to trouble ourselves with such questions. The Bible never tells men to look at these questions, but commands them to believe. Salvation, it always teaches, does not turn on the point, "Did Christ die for me?" but on the point, "Do I believe on Christ?" If men do not "have eternal life," it is never because God did not love them, or because Christ was not given for them, but because they do not believe on Christ.

In leaving this verse, I may remark, that the idea maintained by Erasmus, Olshausen, Wetstein, Rosenmuller, and others, that it does not contain our Lord's words, and that from this verse down to the 21st we have St. John's comments or observations, appears to me utterly destitute of foundation, and unsupported by a single argument worth noticing. That our Lord would not have used the third person in speaking of Himself is no argument. We find Him frequently speaking of Himself in the third person. See for instance John v. 19, 29. There is literally nothing to be gained by adopting the theory, while it contradicts the common belief of nearly all believers in every age of the world.

III

Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world (John 6: 31-33).

[*But my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.*] The use of the present tense should be noticed in this sentence. The idea seems to be, "What Moses could not give you. even the true bread which feeds the soul, my Father does give you, and is actually giving you at this moment, in that He gives you myself."

The expression, "giveth you," must not be supposed to imply actual reception on the part of the Jews. It rather means "giving" in the sense of "offering" for acceptance a thing which those to whom it is offered [might] not receive.—It is a very remarkable saying, and one of those which seems to me to prove unanswerably that Christ is God's gift to the whole world,—that His redemption was made for all mankind,—that He died for all,—and is offered to all. It is like the famous texts, "God so loved the world that He

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gave His only begotten Son" (John iii. 16); and, "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son" (1 John v. 11). It is a gift no doubt which is utterly thrown away, like many other gifts of God to man, and is profitable to none but those that believe. But that God nevertheless does in a certain sense actually "give" His Son, as the true bread from heaven, even to the wicked and unbelieving, appears to me incontrovertibly proved by the words before us. It is a remarkable fact that Erskine, the famous Scotch seceder, based his right to offer Christ to all, on these very words, and defended himself before the General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland on the strength of them. He asked the Moderator to tell him what Christ meant when He said, "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven," and got no answer. The truth is, I venture to think that the text cannot be answered by the advocates of an extreme view of particular redemption. Fairly interpreted, the words mean that in some sense or another the Father does actually "give" the Son to those who are not believers. They warrant preachers and teachers in making a wide, broad, full, free, unlimited offer of Christ to all mankind without exception.

Even Hutcheson, the Scotch divine, though a strong advocate of particular redemption, remarks, "Even such as are, at present, but carnal and unsound, are not secluded from the offer of Christ; but upon right terms may expect that He will be gifted to them."

33.—[*The bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.*] ...The expression, "the bread of God," seems equivalent to the expression of the preceding verse, "the true bread." It is that real satisfying food for the soul which God has provided.

The expression, which "cometh down from heaven," is an assertion of the Divine origin of that spiritual food which God had provided. Like the manna, it came down from heaven, but in a far higher, fuller, and deeper sense, than the manna did. It was "that personal bread," of which they would soon hear more distinctly.

The expression, "giveth life to the world," implies a contrast between the "bread of God" and the manna. The manna only supplied the hunger of the twelve tribes of Israel: viz., 600,000 men and their families. The bread of God was for the whole world, and provided eternal life for every member of Adam's family who would eat of it, whether Jew or Gentile.

We should mark, again, what a strong argument these words supply in favour of the doctrine of Christ being God's gift to all. That all the world has not life from Christ, and does not believe in Him, is undoubtedly true. But that life is provided in Christ, and salvation sufficient for all the world, appears to be the natural interpretation of the text.

IV

But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came

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down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day (John 6: 36-9).

Some could even see and hear Christ himself, while He was on earth, and yet remain unbelieving! Surely we have no right to be surprised if we find like unbelief now. Men may actually see Christ with their bodily eyes and have no faith.

37.—[*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.*] The connection of this verse with the preceding one seems to be this: "Your unbelief does not move Me or surprise Me. I foresaw it, and have been aware of it. Nevertheless, your unbelief will not prevent God's purposes taking effect. Some will believe, though you remain unbelieving. Everything that the Father gives Me will come unto Me in due time: believe, and be saved. In spite of your unbelief, all my sheep shall sooner or later come to Me by faith, and be gathered within my fold. I see your unbelief with sorrow, but not with anxiety and surprise. I am prepared for it. I know that you cannot alter God's purposes: and in accordance with those purposes, a people will come to Me, though you do not."

Luther, quoted by Besser, supposes our Lord to say, "This sermon shall not on your account be of none effect, and remain without fruit. If you will not, another will; if you do not believe, yet another does."

The English language fails to give the full sense of the Greek in this sentence. The literal meaning of the Greek is, not "all persons whom the Father giveth shall come," but "everything,—the whole thing." It is not a masculine plural, but a neuter singular. The idea is either "that whole mystical body, the company of my believing people, shall come to Me," or else "every single part or jot or member of my mystical body shall come to Me, and not one be found missing at last."

We learn from these words the great and deep truth of God's election and appointment to eternal life of a people out of this world. The Father from all eternity has given to the Son a people to be His own peculiar people. The saints are given to Christ by the Father as a flock, which Christ undertakes to save completely, and to present complete at the last day. (See John xvii. 2, 6, 9, 11, 12: and xviii. 9.) However wicked men may abuse this doctrine, it is full of comfort to a humble believer. He did not begin the work of His salvation. He was given to Christ by the Father, by an everlasting covenant.

We learn from these words the great mark of God's elect, whom He has given to Christ. They all come to Christ by faith. It is useless for any one to boast of his election unless he comes to Christ by faith. Until a man comes humbly to Jesus, and commits his soul to Him as a believer, we have no dependable evidence of the man's election.

Beza remarks, "Faith in Christ is a certain testimony of our election, and consequently of our future glorification."

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Ferus says, "Cleaving to Christ by faith, thou art sure thy predestination."

We learn from these words the irresistible power of God's electing grace. All who are given to Christ shall come to Him. No obstacle, no difficulty, no power of the world, the flesh, and the devil, can prevent them. Sooner or later they will break through all, and surmount all. If "given," they will "come." To ministers the words are full of comfort.

[*Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.*] These words declare Christ's willingness to save every one that comes to Him. There is an infinite readiness in Christ to receive, pardon, justify, and glorify sinners. The expression "I will in no wise cast out," implies this. It is a very powerful form of negation. "So far from casting out the man that comes to Me, I will receive him with joy when he comes. I will not refuse him on account of past sins. I will not cast him off again because of present weaknesses and infirmities. I will keep him to the end by my grace. I will confess him before my Father in the judgment-day, and glorify him for ever. In short I will do the very opposite of casting him out."

The distinction between the language of this clause of the text and that of the former clause, should be carefully noticed. They who "shall come to Christ," are "that who(e) thing" which the Father gives. But it is "each individual man" that comes, of whom Jesus says, "I will in no wise cast him out."

To "cast out of the synagogue,"—to "cut off from the congregation of Israel"—to "shut out of the camp," as the leper was shut out (Lev. xiii. 46)., were ideas with which all Jews were familiar. Our Lord seems to say, "I will do the very opposite of all this."

A[dam] Clarke thinks that the idea is that of a poor person coming to a rich man's house for shelter and relief, who is kindly treated and not "cast out." But may we not suppose after all that the latent thought is that of the man fleeing to the city of refuge, according to the law of Moses, who, once admitted, is safe and not "cast out"? (Num. xxxv. 11, 12.)

We learn from these words that the one point we should look to is, "whether we do really come to Christ." Our past lives may have been very bad. Our present faith may be very weak. Our repentance and prayers, may be very imperfect and poor. Our knowledge of religion may be very scanty. But do we come to Christ? That is the question. If so, the promise belongs to us. Christ will not cast us out. We may remind Him boldly of His own word.

We learn from these words, that Christ's offers to sinners are wide, broad, free, unlimited, and unconditional. We must take care that we do not spoil and hamper them by narrow statements. God's election must never be thrust nakedly at unconverted sinners, in preaching the Gospel. It is a point with which at present they have nothing to do. No doubt; it is true that none will come to Christ but those who are given to Him by the Father. But who those are that are so given we cannot tell, and must not attempt to define. All we have to do is to invite every one, without exception, to come to Christ, and to tell men that; every one who does come to Christ; shall be received and saved. To this point we must carefully stick.

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Rollock observes how close this glorious promise stands to our Lords words about God's election and predestination. Election should never be stated nakedly and baldly, without reminding those who hear it of Christ's infinite willingness to receive and save all.

Hutcheson remarks, "Saints do indeed of times complain of casting off; but they are the words of sense and not of faith: they may seem to be cast off when really it is not so."

38.—[*For I came down...not mine own will, etc.*] The meaning of this verse appears to be as follows. "I did not become man and enter this world to do anything of my own independent will and volition, and without reference to the will of my Father. On the contrary, I have come to carry out His will. As God, my will is in entire harmony and unity with my Father's will, because I and my Father are one. As man, I have no other will and desire than to do that which is in entire accordance with the will of Him who has sent Me to be the Mediator and Friend of sinners."—What the Father's will about man is, our Lord goes on immediately to state in the two following verses. One part of the Father's will is, that nothing should be lost that He has given to the Son. That "will" Christ came to carry out and accomplish.—Another part of the Father's will is, that every one who trusts in Christ, may be saved. That "will" again Christ came to carry out and accomplish.—The verse before us and the two following are closely connected, and should be looked at as one great thought. It was the Father's "will" that free salvation by Christ should be brought near and within the reach of every one, and it was also His "will" that every believer in Christ should be completely and finally saved. To work out and accomplish this will of His Father was Christ's object in coming into the world.

The expression, "I came down from heaven," is a strong proof of the pre-existence of Christ. It could not possibly be said of any prophet or apostle, that He "came down from heaven." It is a heavy blow at the Socinian theory that Christ was nothing more than a man.

39.—[*This is the Father's will which hath sent Me.*] In this verse and the following, Christ explains fully what was the Father's will concerning the Son's mission into the world. It was that He should receive all and lose none, that any one might come to Him, and that no comer should be lost. It is a cheering and pleasant thought, that free and full salvation, and the final perseverance of believers should be so expressly declared to be "the will of the Father."

[*Of all...given...lose nothing.*] Here again there is the same form of speech as in the thirty-seventh verse. Literally rendered, the sentence would be, "that of the whole thing which He has given Me, I should not lose anything out of it." The "losing" must necessarily mean, that "I should let nothing be taken away by the power of Satan, and allow nothing to come to ruin by its own inherent weakness." The general sense of the sentence must be, "that I should allow no member of my mystical body to be lost."

We have in these words the doctrine of the final perseverance of true believers. It seems hard to imagine stronger words than these to express the doctrine. It is the Father's will that no one whom He has given to Christ

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should be lost. His will must surely take effect. True believers may err and fail in many things, but they shall never finally be cast away. The will of God the Father, and the power of Christ the Son are both engaged on their side.

We have in these words abundant comfort for all fearful and faint-hearted believers. Let such remember that if they "come" to Christ by faith, they have been "given" to Christ by the Father; and if given by the Father to Christ, it is the Father's will that they should never be cast away. Let them lean back on this thought, when cast down and disquieted;—"It is the Father's will that I should not be lost."

[Should raise it up again at the last day.] We have in these words the Father's will that all Christ's members shall have a glorious resurrection. They shall not only not be lost and cast away while they live: they shall be raised again to glory after they die. Christ will not only justify and pardon, keep and sanctify; He will do even more: He will raise them up at the last day to a life of glory. It is the Father's will that He should do so. The bodies of the saints are provided for, no less than their souls.

V

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6: 44).

44.—[*No man can come...except the Father draw him.*] The connection between this verse and the preceding one is not clear. Like many passages in St. John's writings, the language is elliptical, and the link must be supplied. But the precise link in the present case is not very evident. I believe it is something of this sort: "You are murmuring among yourselves because I speak of coming down from heaven; and you are making my apparently low origin an excuse for not believing on Me. But all the time the fault is not in my sayings, but in your want of grace, and your unbelief. There is a deeper and more solemn truth, to which you seem totally blind: and that is, man's need of God's grace in order to believe on Me. You are never likely to believe until you acknowledge your own corruption, and ask for grace to draw your souls to Me. I am aware that it needs something more than argument and reasoning to make any one believe in Me. Your unbelief and murmuring do not surprise Me or discourage Me. I neither expect to see you nor any one else believe, until you are drawn by my Father."—This, or something like it, seems to me the connecting link. One thing at any rate is certain: our Lord did not mean to excuse the unbelief of His hearers: He rather desired to magnify their danger and guilt, and to make them see that faith in Him was not so easy an affair as they supposed. It was not knowledge of His origin alone, but the drawing grace of God the Father which they needed. Let them awake to see that, and cry for grace before it was too late.

The general lesson of the sentence, apart from the connection, is one of vast importance. Our Lord lays down the great principal "that no man whatsoever can come to Christ by faith, and really believe in Him, unless God the Father draws him so to come, and inclines his will to believe." The nature of man since the fall is so corrupt and depraved, that even when

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Christ is made known and preached to him, he will not come to Him and believe in Him, without the special grace of God inclining his will and giving him a disposition to come. Moral suasion and advice alone will not bring him. He must be "drawn."

This is no doubt a very humbling truth, and one which in every age has called forth the hatred and opposition of man. The favourite notion of man is that he can do what he likes,—repent or not repent, believe or not believe, come to Christ or not come, entirely at his own discretion. In fact man likes to think that his salvation is in his own power. Such notions are flatly contradictory to the text before us. The words of our Lord here are clear and unmistakable, and cannot be explained away.

(a) This doctrine of human impotence, whether man likes it or not, is the uniform teaching of the Bible. The natural man is dead, and must be born again, and brought to life. (Ephesians ii. 1.) He has neither knowledge, nor faith, nor inclination toward Christ, until grace comes into his heart. Man never of himself begins with God. God must first begin with man. And this beginning is just the "drawing" of the text.

(b) It is the doctrine of the Church of England, as shown in the 10th. Article, and of every protestant confession of faith which dates from the 16th and 17th centuries.

(c) Last, but not least, it is the doctrine of experience. The longer ministers of the Gospel live, the more do they find that there is something to be done in every heart which neither preaching, teaching, arguing, exhorting, nor means of grace can do. When all has been done, God must "draw," or there is no fruit.—The more the holiest Christians are examined, the more general is their testimony found that without grace they never would have been converted, and that God "drew" them, or else they never would have come to Christ. And it is a curious fact moreover, that many who profess to deny man's impotence in theory, often confess it in their prayers and praises, almost in spite of themselves. Many people are very low Arminians in print or in the pulpit, but excellent Calvinists on their knees.

When our Lord says, "No man can come unto Me," we must carefully remember that it is *moral* inability and not *physical* inability that He speaks of. We are not to suppose that any man can have a sincere and hearty wish to come to Christ, and yet be prevented by some mysterious impotence. The impotence lies in man's will. He *cannot come* because he *will not come*.—There is an Old Testament sentence which throws much light on the expression before us. It is said of Joseph's brethren, that "they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him." (Genesis xxxvii, 4.) Any one must see at a glance what this "could not" means.. They "could not" because they "would not".

When our Lord says, "Except the Father draw him," we must not suppose that the "drawing" means such a violent drawing as the drawing of a prisoner to a jail, of an ox to the slaughter-house, a drawing in short against a man's will. It is a drawing which the Father effects through the man's own will, by creating a new principle within him. By the unseen agency of the Holy Ghost He works on the man's heart, without the man himself knowing it at the time, inclines him to think, induces him to feel, shows him his

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sinfulness, and so leads him at length to Christ. Every one that comes to Christ is so drawn.

Scott remarks, "The Father as it were cures the fever of the soul; He creates the appetite; He sets the provisions before the sinner; He convinces him that they are wholesome and pleasant, and that he is welcome; and thus the man is drawn to come and eat and live for ever."

The well-known quotation from Augustine which seems so great a favourite with many commentators on this text., appears to me defective. He argues that God's drawing of men to Christ is so entirely a drawing through man's will, that it is like drawing the sheep by offering it food,—like drawing and alluring a child by offering him nuts.—But there is this wide difference, that both the sheep and the child have a natural taste and inclination for the thing offered. Man, on the contrary, has none at all. God's first act is to give man a will to come to Christ. As the 10th Article of the Church of England says, we need "the grace of Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will."

The theory that all members of the Church and all baptized people are "drawn by God," appears to me a most baseless theory, and practically a most mischievous one. It would reduce the "drawing" to nothing, and make it a thing which the majority of Christians resist. I believe the drawing is a thing that belongs to none but God's elect, and is a part of the procedure by which their salvation is effected. They are chosen in Christ. from all eternity, and then drawn to Christ in time.

There are several very important principles of theology connected with this remarkable sentence, which it may be useful to put down together, before we leave the passage.

(a) We must never suppose that the doctrine of this verse takes away man's responsibility and accountableness to God for his soul. On the contrary, the Bible always distinctly declares that if any man is lost, it is his own fault. He "loses his own soul." (Mark viii. 36.) If we cannot reconcile God's sovereignty and man's responsibility now, we need not doubt that it will be all plain at the last day.

(b) We must not allow the doctrine of this verse to make us limit, or narrow the offer of salvation to sinners. On the contrary, we must hold firmly that pardon and peace are to be offered freely through Christ to every man and woman without exception. We never know who they are that God will draw, and have nothing to do with it. Our duty is to invite all, and leave it to God to choose the vessels of mercy.

(c) We must not suppose that we, or anybody else, are drawn, unless we come to Christ by faith. This is the grand mark and evidence of any one being the subject of the Father's drawing work. If "drawn" he comes to Christ, believes, and loves. Where there is no faith and love, there may be self-conceit, and high profession. But there is no "drawing of the Father.

(d) We must always remember that God ordinarily works by means, and specially by such means as He Himself has appointed. No doubt He acts as a Sovereign in drawing souls to Christ. We cannot pretend to explain why

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some are drawn and others are not drawn. Nevertheless, we must carefully maintain the great principle that God ordinarily draws through the instrumentality of His Word. The man that neglects the public preaching and private reading of God's Word, has no right to expect that God will draw him. The thing is possible, but highly improbable.

(e) We must never allow ourselves or others to waste time in trying to find out, as a first question in religion, whether we are drawn of God the Father, elect, chosen, and the like. The first and indeed the main question we have to do with is, whether we have come to Christ by faith. If we have, let us take comfort and be thankful. None come to Him unless they are drawn.

Augustine remarks: "If thou dost not desire to err, do not seek to determine whom God draws, and whom He does not draw; nor why He draws one man and not another. But if thou thyself art not drawn by God, pray to Him that thou mayest be drawn."

The words of the 17th Article of the Church of England are weighty and wise: "We must receive God's promises in such wise as they are generally set forth to us in Holy Scripture: and in our doings, that will of God is to be followed which we have expressly declared unto us in the Word of God."

Whether the "drawing" of God the Father is irresistible or not, is a point on which good men differ greatly. My own opinion is decided that it is irresistible. Those whom the Father draws and calls, always "obey the calling." (See 17th Article of the Church of England.) As Rollock truly remarks, there is often a great fight and struggle when the drawing grace of God first begins to work on the soul, and the consequence is great distress and depression. But when grace once begins it always wins the victory at last.

[*I will raise him up at the last day.*] This is the same sentence that we have had twice already, and shall have once again. Whosoever does come to Christ, and has the great mark of faith, shall be raised by Christ to a life of eternal glory at the last day. None come but those who are "drawn;" but all who do come shall be raised.

VI

I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world (John 6: 51).

When our Lord says, "I will *give* my flesh," it appears to me that He can only mean, "I will give it to die, to suffer, to be offered up on the cross, as a sacrifice for sin."

When our Lord says, "I will give my flesh *for the life* of the world," I believe He means, "I will give my body to death, on account of, for the sake of, to procure, purchase, and obtain the life of the world." I will give my death to

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procure the world's life. My death shall be the ransom, the payment, and the redemption-money, by which eternal life shall be purchased for a world of sinners."

I hold strongly that the idea of substitution is contained in these words of our Lord, and that the great doctrine of His vicarious death, which is so directly stated elsewhere (Rom. v. 6-8), is indirectly implied in this sentence.

When our Lord says, "I will give my flesh for the life of the world," I can only see one meaning in the word "world." It means all mankind. And the idea contained, I believe, is the same as we have elsewhere: viz., that Christ died for all mankind; not for the elect only, but for all mankind. (See John i. 29, and iii. 16, and my notes on each text.) That all the world is not saved is perfectly certain. That many die in unbelief and get no benefit from Christ's death is certain. But that Christ's death was enough for all mankind, and that when He died He made sufficient atonement for all the world, are truths which, both in this text and others like it, appear to my mind incontrovertible.

Let us note, in this verse, what a full and broad offer Christ holds out to sinners: He says, "If any man," no matter who or what he may have been, "If any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever." Happy would it be for many, whose whole hearts are set on eating and drinking, and feasting their poor perishable bodies, if they would only look at these words! It is only those who eat this bread who shall live for ever.

Let us remember how impossible it is for any one to explain the end of this verse who denies the sacrificial character of Christ's death. Once grant that Christ is only a great teacher and example, and that His death is only a great pattern of self-denial, and what sense or meaning can be got out of the end of this verse? "I will give my flesh for the life of the world"! I unhesitatingly say that the words are unintelligible nonsense if we receive the teaching of many modern divines about Christ's death, and that nothing can make them intelligible and instructive but the doctrine of Christ's vicarious death, and satisfaction on the cross as our Substitute.

VII

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my *sheep*, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep (John 10: 11-15).

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[*The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.*] Our Lord here shows the distinguishing mark of a good shepherd. Such an one will lay down his life for his sheep, to save, protect, and defend them. He will die rather than lose one. He will peril his life, like David attacking the lion and the bear, rather than let one be taken from him. "All this," our Lord implies, "I have come to do for my spiritual sheep. I have come to shed my life-blood to save their souls: to die that they may live." The word "giveth" here should have been translated "layeth down." It is so rendered in the 15th verse.

12, 13.—[*But he that is an hireling, etc.*] Our Lord in these two verses illustrates the subject He has taken up, by showing the wide difference between a mere hired shepherd, and one who feels a special interest in his sheep because they are his own. A mere hired servant, who has not spent his money in buying the sheep, but only takes charge of a flock for pay, and cares little so long as he gets his money, such an one, as a general rule, will make no sacrifice and run no risk for the sheep. If he sees a wolf coming he will not meet him and fight, but will run away, and leave the flock to be scattered and devoured. He acts in this way because his whole heart is not in his work. He feeds the flock for money and not for love,—for what he can get by it, and not because he really cares for the sheep...

[*And I lay down my life for the sheep.*] Our Lord, to show how truly He is the Good Shepherd, declares that like a good shepherd He not only knows all His sheep, but lays down His life for them. By using the present tense, He seems to say, "I am doing it. I am just about to do it. I came into the world to do it." This can only refer to His own atoning death on the cross: the great propitiation He was about to make by shedding His life-blood. It was the highest proof of love. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John xv. 13.)

Taken alone and by itself this sentence undoubtedly contains the doctrine of particular redemption. It declares that Christ "lays down His life for the sheep." That He does so in a special sense I think none can deny. The "sheep" alone, or true believers, obtain any saving benefit from His death. But to argue from this text, that in no sense and in no way did Christ die for any beside His "sheep," is to say what seems to me to contradict Scripture. The plain truth is that the extent of redemption is not the leading subject of this verse. Our Lord is saying what He does for His sheep: He loves them so that He dies for them. But it does not follow that we are to conclude that His death was not meant to influence and affect the position of all mankind. I venture to refer the reader to my own notes, in this commentary, on John i. 29; iii. 16; and vi. 32, for a full discussion of the subject.

VIII

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him... I have manifested thy name unto the

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men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word...I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine...Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth...As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world...Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me (John 17: 1-21).

9.—[*I pray for them, etc., etc.*] In this verse our Lord begins that part of His prayer which is specially intercessory, and proceeds to name things which He asks for His disciples, from this point down to the end of the chapter. It may be convenient to remember that the things He asks may be divided under four heads. He prays that His disciples may be (a) kept, (b) sanctified, (c) united, (d) and be with Him in glory. Four more important things cannot be desired for believers.

To say, as some have said, that our Lord's intercessory prayer is an exact specimen of what He does in heaven as our High Priest, is straining a point, and going too far. To suppose that the Son literally asks things of the Father by prayer in heaven, is in my judgment unreasonable, and a very limited, narrow view of Christ's intercession. We are reading a prayer made by our Lord during the time of His earthly ministry, before His ascension and session at God's right hand; and we are not reading an account of what He does for us, as our Priest, within the veil. Let it suffice us to believe that the intercession of this chapter exhibits accurately Christ's mind toward believers, His desires for believers, the active interest He takes in believers, and the graces He would fain see in believers. Above all, let us believe that, if we seek for ourselves the same four things that Jesus here names, we have a Friend in heaven who will take care that we do not seek in vain, and will make our prayer effectual.

There are two interpretations of our Lord's meaning, when He speaks of praying for the disciples, and "not praying for the world."

Some, as Bengel and Alford, think that our Lord meant, "At this present moment I pray specially for my disciples, and not for the world." They will not admit that our Lord does not pray and intercede in any way for the wicked and unbelieving; and they quote, with some show of reason, His prayer at the crucifixion for His murderers,— "Father, forgive them." (Luke xxiii. 34.)

Others, as Hutcheson and Lampe, think that our Lord meant, I pray specially for my disciples, because now and always it is their special privilege to be prayed for and interceded for by Me." The advocates of this view maintain that it is derogatory to our Lord's honour to suppose that He can ever ask anything in vain; and that His intercession specially belongs to

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"those who come unto God by Him." (Heb. vii. 25.)

The point in dispute is a nice and delicate one, and will probably never be settled. On the one hand we must take care that we do not forget that our Lord Jesus Christ does take a special interest in His believing people, and does do special things for them which He does not do for the wicked and unbelieving.—On the other hand we must not forget that our Lord pities all, cares for all, and has provided salvation sufficient for all mankind. There is no escaping the text which says of the wicked that they "deny the Lord that bought them." (2 Peter ii. 1.) The most fair and honest interpretation of the text, "God so loved the world" (John iii. 16), is to regard "the world" as meaning all mankind.

The whole dispute turns, as is often the case in such disputes, on the meaning we put on a word. If by "intercession" we mean vaguely and generally the whole mediatorial work of Christ on behalf of mankind, it is then true that Christ intercedes for all, both good and bad; and this text before us must mean, "I pray at this moment specially for my people, and am only thinking of them."—If, on the other hand, we mean by "intercession" that special work which Christ does for His people, in order to carry them to heaven, after calling, pardoning, justifying, renewing, and sanctifying them, it is then plain that Christ intercedes for none but believers, and that the words before us mean, "I pray now, as always, specially for my disciples, and not for the world."

If I must give an opinion, I must own that I decidedly hold the second or last view of which I have spoken. I believe that Christ never, in the fullest sense of the word, "makes intercession" for the wicked. I believe that such intercession is a peculiar privilege of the saints, and one grand reason of their continuance in grace. They stand, because there is One in heaven who actively and effectually intercedes. I will give place to no one in maintaining that Jesus loves all mankind, came into the world for all, died for all, provided redemption sufficient for all, calls on all, invites all, commands all to repent and believe; and ought to be offered to all—freely, fully, unreservedly, directly, unconditionally—without money and without price. If I did not hold this, I dare not get into a pulpit, and I should not understand how to preach the Gospel.

But while I hold all this, I maintain firmly that Jesus does special work for those who believe, which He does not do for others. He quickens them by His Spirit, calls them by His grace, washes them in His blood—justifies them, sanctifies them, keeps them, leads them, and continually intercedes for them—that they may not fall. If I did not believe all this, I should be a very miserable, unhappy Christian.

Holding this opinion, I regard the text before us as one which describes our Lord's special intercession for His people; and I take the meaning to be simply, "I pray for them, as my peculiar people, that they may be kept, sanctified, united, and glorified; but I do not pray for the world."

The famous text, "Father, forgive them" (Luke xxiii. 34), is at best a doubtful one. Will any one undertake to say, that those for whom our Lord prayed were never forgiven and saved?—Have we forgotten that within fifty days after that prayer 3,000 souls were converted at Pentecost, of whom Peter

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said, "By wicked hands ye crucified and slew Jesus of Nazareth"? (Acts ii. 23.) Who can prove that the very men who crucified our Lord were not among the number of the converted, and were thus the answer to our Lord's prayer?—These however are conjectures at the very best. The matter is one which is not necessary to salvation, and one about which Christians must agree to differ, and must not ex-communicate one another. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." (Rom. xiv. 5.)

Hengstenberg remarks, "The world may be viewed under two aspects. First, there is the susceptibility of grace, which, despite the depths of the sinful depravation of Adam's race, still remains in it. Of the world in this sense Jesus says, 'I came not into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world.' (John i. 29; iii. 17.) Viewed under this aspect, the world is the subject of Christ's intercession. The disciples themselves were won from the world. But the world may also be viewed as ruled by predominantly ungodly principles. Of the world in this sense we read that it cannot receive the 'Spirit of truth.' (John xiv. 27.) To pray for the world, thus viewed, would be as vain as to pray for the prince of this world."

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