

(Concluded from Page 307.)

*Atonement and Law: Or, Redemption in Harmony with Law as Revealed in Nature.* By JOHN M. ARMOUR. Third Edition. Philadelphia: The Christian Statesman Publishing Co., 1520 Chestnut Street. 1886. Large 12mo, pp. 240.

Our author does not profess to do away with all the mystery of the Atonement. Divine truth may be expected to contain somewhat beyond the capacity of unaided human reason to comprehend. But it is a worthy purpose to show that the doctrine which "he who runs may read" in the Scriptures, and which can only be excluded by *misreading* them, is not in any manner contradictory to reason. The difficulties which almost every one perceives are, as to the questions, *how* were the sufferings of Christ adequate to take the place of the punishment of men for their sins, and how is the *application* of that adequacy made available in fact? We do not see relief from the honest burden of these questions without recognizing the truth which Horace Bushnell most clearly brought out, that "man's sinning means," or involves, from the foundation of the world, "God's suffering." Of this, the culmination and manifestation met in our Lord's person at Gethsemane and on Calvary. Moreover, there is much force in J. G. Armour's suggestions in these sentences:

"The satisfaction rendered by Christ no one of the saved can fully comprehend. The ransom price paid for our redemption God alone can fully estimate; but all the saved should know and understand that this satisfaction is every way perfect, and they may be all the more convinced that it is perfect because they are unable to comprehend or estimate it."

"When it is maintained that Christ by his obedience, culminating in his sacrificial sufferings and death, fully satisfied the law, men say at once, It is incredible. . . They do not reflect that the denial of this doctrine implies the acceptance of a view of Christ's work which is rash and unwarrantable indeed; viz: that they are capable of weighing and estimating the obedience and sufferings of Christ, nay, that they have done this already, and have found them falling short of what the law required. Meantime they seem quite oblivious of the fact that the element of the infinite enters into that which they have been weighing and estimating. How Christ could fully satisfy the claims of law, endure 'in strict rigor of justice the unrelaxed penalty of the law' in his person, must be to all created intelligence forevermore a mystery incomprehensible as that of creation itself. But, so far from being incredible that a *Divine Saviour* should be able to do this, it is incredible that he should fail to do so."

How "*faith* looks up to Thee, Thou Lamb of Calvary,"—the heart responding while the intellect waits aside, "Jesus paid it all, all the debt I owe,"—this testimony of feeling, intuition, *revelation*,

should be recognized fully, and respected as valid testimony, in Christian thought.

Our author is eloquent in denunciation of the idea of the *relaxation* of law, by divine sovereignty, setting aside all penalty, in simple mercy, remitting justice altogether.

"God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb?" By direct interference with the fierce law that governs the wintry storm? God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb? Sentiment, mere sentiment unsupported by a solitary shred of evidence. I beg pardon of these sweet souls whose philosophy of redemption, whose system of theology, whose creed, beginning and end of it, is simply this: 'God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb.' I ask, what god? Assuredly not the God who rules this world. Let there be 'a scientific test,' a test by the thermometer. On the bleak hill top let the shorn lamb stand side by side with the unshorn. Ah! your poetic fancy is driven as chaff before the wind. Proclaim it in this world, proclaim it in all worlds. God does not temper the wind to the shorn lamb. This is Satan's theology, the same he taught in Eden: 'Ye shall not surely die.' It is not in accordance with Scripture, with man's experience or observation; it is not simply nonsense, it is a deceptive and ruinous error. The shepherd who should accept this as his creed could not be called 'the good shepherd.' The good shepherd is not, must not be a fool. His creed must not be made of poetic fancies, but of substantial and even awful realities. God has indeed provided a way for the protection of shorn lambs, but it is one that includes the utmost care and pains on the part of the good shepherd in gathering them into the warm and secure fold; a way that in no sense interferes with the onward movement of the most terrific storm, according to its own law. Relief, deliverance, protection, come by intervention alone, by intervention of power or means adapted to the necessities of the case. This is God's way. In this way law is honored, in that it has full and free scope, honored in that its force is met; in this way also law is honored in that its higher resources are displayed. The brave shepherd who carries the stricken lamb in his bosom is acting under a higher law than that which guides the storm in its appointed course. He battles with, and, as far as the shorn lamb is concerned, vanquishes the storm, rescues its victim, wards off its fierce blasts."

Commending this book as we have done as a very valuable contribution to the study of a most important subject, it may be allowable to say that it is not quite perfect. Without being diffuse, or even feeble in style, the author often repeats himself; goes over the same ground again and again. In conversation or oral instruction this is not only natural, but may be sometimes needful for making an effective impression. But in writing for thoughtful and attentive readers, brevity is a most desirable trait, and repetition

becomes wearisome. Condensation might much improve the last half of the book.

One part of the argument in its earlier portion appears to us incomplete; where the author speaks of all *motion* proceeding from *life*. Neither by observation nor by direct and obvious inference do we ascribe the movements of rivers, winds and clouds to organic or other life. Analogy does, it is true, suggest, and reason sustains, the thought, that these and all other motions in the universe proceed, not from life as such, but from the will and power of a Being who lives: the One First Cause. Several times in the book we see hints of the author's mental training, under the influence of predestinarian conceptions; as on pages 26, 27, 29, 56 and 103. The argument of the book is not seriously affected, however, by this bias. Under other antecedents he might have broadened his treatment of his lofty theme, in a manner for which we must look to thinkers like Maurice or McLeod Campbell: viewing the Divine side of the Atonement, as the consummation of Love, whereby Christ, coming down from the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, suffered all things that He might not merely avert from them the inevitable consequences of sin, but might bring many sons to glory, that where He is there might they be also. But the theme is too vast for any one book, or one author, to compass; angels and the redeemed of all nations will celebrate it throughout eternity.