

THE "STRANGE DOCTRINE"

ON

PROPITIATION.

MR. C. E. Stuart states his peculiar teaching in these words (Recent Utterances, p. 42):—"Where and when has propitiation by blood been made by Him? The answer is simple—in heaven and after death. Mr. Pinkerton [who laboured till his death in the East, and only expresses in substance what saints hitherto have believed and confessed] affirms all was done in this world, not in heaven. If so, propitiation by blood the Lord has not made, nor can He make it. The doctrine we are asked to accept sweeps away all hope of salvation, for atonement is not complete without propitiation by blood, and this Mr. Pinkerton really denies that the Lord did and could effect. His doctrine is in flat opposition to the Word of God."

That a view of fundamental truth, unknown to scripture and opposed to the faith of God's elect, was asserted plainly and emphatically, is a mercy: no upright Christian can doubt its meaning. Hence, from its first coming to our knowledge in 1886, it was condemned in our midst, not with party spirit certainly but pain and sorrow; for many had sympathised with Mr. S. as a previously ill-used man. An open and full discussion took place at the Birmingham Conference of 1887; where one, seeming to lean toward the delusion, yet denying that he accepted it, excited censure and fears. When he avowed it soon afterwards, he was refused a place at the Lord's Supper in Kenilworth, but, profanely snatching the bread and wine, was forthwith put away. Afterwards two at Bournemouth were discovered to hold the

same false doctrine, and withdrew as it was opposed. Only a few years ago one of inquisitive turn, in or near Swansea, came under the same sentence for the same offence against the Lord and His atoning work. All concurred in every quarter, as far as we know. No person known to hold it has been, or would be, tolerated in fellowship.

For this "strange doctrine" robs Christ's work on the cross of the efficacy scripture assigns to it, and attributes propitiation wholly to what Christ did "in heaven and after death," on which scripture is silent. The fable is owing, in part to a misconstruing of the type in Lev. xvi., and in part to human reasoning on Heb. ii. 17, viii. 4, and ix. 12, which in no way bear out the notion, the last even refuting it. For there it is said that Christ entered by His own blood once for all into the holies, having found (not, to find) an eternal redemption. No doubt, Aaron necessarily had to go into the holiest, in order to put the blood there; as he had also to come out for the substitution, when he laid the sins and iniquities on the scape-goat. For propitiation and substitution were essential to atonement. The error lies in denying that both were fulfilled in Christ's work on the cross, and inventing a chimerical propitiation "in heaven and after death," which supplants the real one.

God set forth Christ Jesus, not exactly a propitiation (which of course is pre-supposed), but a propitiatory or mercy-seat through faith in His blood (Rom. iii. 25): not a word about fresh action for it "in heaven and after death." All hung on the redemption that is in Christ; and "death" took place for this redemption, as Heb. ix. 15 lays down: absolute silence as to a subsequent act of propitiation. For propitiation He had suffered, bled, and died. Hence 1 John ii. 1 declares that Jesus "is the propitiation for our sins, yet not for our sins only, but also for the whole world." 1 John iv. 10 adds that God sent His Son into the world (not

took Him to heaven after death) as "propitiation for our sins." So on the cross He said, "It is finished," and delivered up His spirit. Then was the veil of the temple rent from top to bottom, and the earth was shaken, and the rocks were rent, and the graves were opened. Can any soul fail to recognise that all was in witness and honour of His atoning death, not of something done "after death and in heaven?" No believer doubts that its infinite value instantly reached heaven and lasts through eternity. But how false, evil, and blind to deny propitiation to Christ's sufferings and blood on the cross, of which scripture speaks continually! and to supplant that truth by that of which scripture says nothing, "in heaven and after death!"

"His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Pet. ii 24). This was both propitiation and substitution: was it "in heaven and after death?" Or wait we for His future work in this respect when He comes out of heaven? How perilous, when Levitical type governs apostolic teaching! "Christ also once for all suffered for sins, just for unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Pet. iii. 18). Not a hint of a further act for this: was it not a full atonement? Did He suffer in heaven, or (as others say) in hades, after death? Away with every dream that dishonours Him crucified!

On the cross Him Who knew no sin God made sin for us. Did not this include propitiation and more? Was it "in heaven and after death?" To the Romans Paul wrote (v. 10), that "we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son": were we "reconciled" without propitiation? To the Colossians he wrote (i. 20-22), that "Christ made peace through the blood of His cross," to reconcile all things on the earth and in the heavens, as He will soon, but meanwhile "you . . . He reconciled in the body of His flesh," not when out of it, "through death," not "after it and in

heaven," "to present you holy," &c. Was their reconciliation for so glorious a result without propitiation, or before it? Or is not the new doctrine evil and preposterous? Some, to help it, plead the distinction between the English words, "expiate" and "propitiate." It is baseless; for there is but one word in the Hebrew, as in the Greek. The verbal form is so used in Heb. ii. 17 (for such as we find in Matt. xvi. 22, and Luke xviii. 13 have no place here). It was for man before God in heaven; but no sign ever appears of a fresh work in Christ's case done there after death.

Nevertheless Mr. S. at least was frank and outspoken. He never pretended, like others, that this teaching was unimportant if true, or innocuous if unfounded. He boldly said that Mr. Pinkerton's view, which is beyond doubt that of saints hitherto everywhere, "sweeps away all hope of salvation!" Far be it from us to retort in like extravagance. But he is quite right in claiming the utmost moment for his view if true; and he is not the man to evade the consequences if false; as brethren also have given the strongest proof in united judgment of it. Long ago too we had learnt that, when fatal evil works, the enemy's most seductive and effective instrument in spreading it is the neutral. For the unspiritual fancy that, if one professes not to hold the error, there can be no harm; whereas the precise way to dishonour God and damage man most is to disclaim its acceptance, hoping thereby to escape, while doing all one can to persuade others that it is only a difference of judgment as to certain passages of scripture. So an Arian or an Irvingite, and especially one neutral to either, might say with as little soundness or fear of God. Evidently all depends on the gravity of the case. Here it is a question of the true propitiation of Christ or of a fancied and false one.

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