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THE EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT.

(Continued)

PART 3

That our subject is a vexed question with many, one is fully aware, but because the EXTENT of the Atonement depends upon the very NATURE of the Atonement, it is of paramount importance that we have firm and sound convictions on this matter; for the honour of God and the glory of Christ is indissolubly tied up with this question of EXTENT. Because the doctrines of Sovereign Grace are so contested and scorned by many Christians in this age, it may be helpful to make a few observations.

The theory of Universal Atonement became widespread from the early part of the last century. Christ's death for HIS PEOPLE ONLY was not so universally decried when the basic truth of ELECTION was held; but tragically in the early 1800s the doctrines of FOREKNOWLEDGE, ELECTION, and PREDESTINATION were shelved by great numbers. Arminianism was already widespread in certain sections of non-conformity and at this period in history it began to infiltrate into others.

To fail to teach, and to neglect to emphasize, such a BASIC and FUNDAMENTAL element in the economy of Redemption could bring nothing 'but error and disaster in its wake; which it did. This was the period which saw the commencement of vast missionary enterprises, the bringing into being of societies, and the beginnings of mass evangelism, plus the evolving of new movements which claimed that they alone were according to the New Testament pattern. This was acclaimed by many to be a GOLDEN AGE. If any still harbour such a notion they would do well to think again and re-assess, for it was at this very period that THE SEEDS WERE SOWN and THE STAGE SET for the rot which we now witness in today's Evangelicalism.

At the Reformation God brought the Church out of her darkest night - one thousand years of ignorance and superstition. How was it done? First, by the unearthing of the TRUE WORD OF GOD. Then, men such as Luther, Zwingli, Calvin and others were raised up. These men expounded the

truth. They were not evangelistic gospellers, they were preachers in the Biblical sense. Their preaching was expository - not sketchy. John Calvin preached 343 sermons on the Book of Isaiah alone; 200 from Deuteronomy, and so on. Then followed the Puritan era with such giants of the faith as Owen, Manton, Charnock, Bunyan, Flavel and numerous others, all over the country. These dug deep into the Word of God and expounded its glorious truth SYSTEMATICALLY and THOROUGHLY. However, as always, the Devil made his counter attack, and through Arminius, the old Semi-Pelagian theory had already been revived - that Atonement was universal and that Divine grace was resistible and not sovereign. This gathered momentum with the advent of Wesley.

In no way is the writer denying the fact that the ministry of the Wesleys was used in the sovereignty of God to the salvation of thousands. Chapels sprung up too numerous to count; in some places there were three or four in one parish alone. But Wesley was a travelling preacher; he would pass through an area preaching and then be gone. Consequently, there grew up a vast number of companies of believers, but few shepherds. few men gifted of the Holy Spirit to teach. This led to a CIRCUIT SYSTEM of ministry, with itinerant preachers travelling around from place to place; good men; sincere men; but it was isolated ministry. This system caught on in varying degrees in other sections of non-conformity.

Then the advent of the Brethren movement saw a similar development. The result of this was that thorough doctrinal preaching was bound to suffer, and as for systematic theology, it was well-nigh extinct. Consequently, each generation became less grounded than the former. Any thinking person is bound to see the inevitability of this, for how can a preacher ever deal with such subjects as The Atonement or other vital tenets of the faith in a single sermon? Or even a fortnight's meetings. IT IS AN IMPOSSIBILITY.

The itinerant type of ministry naturally produces text preaching; that is, giving isolated addresses. This in turn tends to the taking of scriptures out of context and often to the careless handling of the Word of God.

Other factors also have a bearing on this. Some have not the time to study in depth and many have not the ability. In all charity let it be said, the Word of God does not yield up its meaning to lazy or casual readers. This is one of the reasons for the means of grace of the public ministry. The Great Head raises up men who are to give themselves to the ministry, and He gives to a church such as will diligently and prayerfully search the Scriptures and faithfully and fearlessly sound out the truth. If a church has not such a gift then it might well question its Biblical position. What scathing remarks have been made in some circles regarding that which such style as ONE-MAN ministry. It is ANY MAN ministry which is unscriptural.

The fact that Christendom has created a hierarchy of religious professionals must in no way make a true church depart from the Biblical ordinance of the ministry, or to relinquish the God ordained office of the teaching elder.

Further to this, the itinerant system tends to engender laziness. Is it not a fact that many preachers travel far and wide with one isolated sermon? The irony is that in the main these are the very men who claim to be following the Biblical pattern.

The object of saying all this is not to cause offence but to point out that these are the main factors which have led to the present state of confused doctrine. Expository preaching has so declined over the past 150 years as to be almost extinct in so-called Evangelicalism, and if one begins to speak of Systematic Theology most Christians today look blank. History alone will prove the point that when the Scriptures are expounded in all their fulness the Church is strong, even: "Terrible as an army with banners" Song of Songs 6.10, but when the ministry becomes weak and patchy, and large sections of the Word of God are never studied, and doctrine is abandoned, then will the people of God become stunted, deficient and weak. prone to any and every error, with consequent confusion.

Possibly it is in this matter of the EXTENT of the Atonement that more bewilderment has been caused than in any other area. The preaching that Christ died for the whole human race and that the Holy Spirit is now seeking to win and woo every sinner to Himself, has been widespread.

So uniform has this teaching become over the past 150 years, and so fervently has it been advocated and accepted, that to affirm the contrary, is immediately to be denounced by some as heretical, and will meet with fierce opposition and ostracism.

Three matters must, however, be carefully considered and held:

1. Since all Adam's race are NOT pardoned and saved, and never will be, then Christ cannot have made atonement for their sins.
2. Holy Scripture CANNOT contradict itself. Being the inspired Word of God there CANNOT be inconsistencies. It CANNOT teach that Christ died for the elect and also affirm that He died for all mankind as well. One or the other must be an erroneous deduction which MEN have drawn.
3. If the Bible teaches PARTICULAR REDEMPTION (which it does), then, there must be both a legitimate and honest answer and interpretation to those passages which prove difficult to so many.

At this point the writer again stresses the importance of holding the Scriptures entire. Sound doctrine does not hang upon an isolated text, rather in the aggregate of truth. Therefore, we have to: "Search the Scriptures" (John 5:39) - "Give attendance to reading" (1 Tim.4:13) - "Search daily" (Acts 17:11) - "Comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (1 Cor.2:13) Whilst this applies to all in private, yet it has a far greater bearing on the office of the minister. He is to study "In meekness" (Psalm 25:9), coming to the Scriptures with an open mind, not with preconceived ideas, or swayed by denominational tradition, Never must pride keep us in a faulty belief: if we have not got it right, then admit it; let none be arrogant.

If our interpretation has been wrong, then let us confess to it, and come to the Word again in complete dependence upon the Holy Spirit, fervently "crying after knowledge, lifting up the voice for understanding, seeking as for silver, searching as for hidden treasures (cf Prov.2:3-4).

For this a man must have time, and one who is fully occupied with business cannot give the time required.

Others there are who have the time but are not diligent and thorough in study. There are ministers who appear to spend a disproportionate amount of time on matters other than study, and some are little more than errand boys for the saints: this is wrong. It was a saying amongst the Puritans that the minister must be kept chained to his desk: this is utterly Biblical (Cf. Acts 6:4).

The Word of God must be studied, not casually read as one would a newspaper or an ordinary book. Neither can the "mysteries of the Kingdom" be solved as one might solve a mathematical problem. It is not as simple as saying two plus two equals four. If we look upon portions of the Word of God as being so simple and plain that we fully understand them, then we shall receive no further light upon the matter; for such an attitude closes the mind to further illumination by the Holy Spirit.

It is sadly possible for a man to assume that he is now in possession of practically all that the Bible teaches; he may be able to quote chapter and verse in a most precise way and be looked upon as a veritable living handbook and walking encyclopaedia of Biblical knowledge. We need to be wary of such, remembering that word: "If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know" (1 Cor.8:2).

No man or church knoweth it all, or ever will; this is why there 'must be constant study, constant preaching, constant examination, constant reassessment, continual reformation and continual readjustment.

No person or church fully attains. True spirituality is on-going and progressive; never static. Also, the Word of God being a LIVING word will ever be yielding up to us fresh wonder and glory, different aspects of truth being suited to our state and growth, and it is as the believer progresses from 'milk' to 'strong meat' that he begins to realise that the Bible is not a collection of isolated texts but is a VAST DOCTRINE and a mighty EMBODIMENT OF TRUTH. Therefore, it must be explored and grappled with in order to attain a right understanding.

PART 4

One of the major faults of loose evangelicalism is that texts take precedence over doctrine; the preaching from isolated verses as opposed to the EXPOSITION of Scripture. This is a HIGHLY DANGEROUS PRACTICE and if it be the norm in ministry, will invariably lead into error. Lest any should take issue on this, let it be substantiated.

Take the teaching of 'soul sleep'. Quite a few there are who teach that between death and the great day of resurrection, the believer is in a state of unconsciousness. They will quote such verses as "The dead know not anything" (Ecc.9.5) - "He giveth His beloved sleep" (Psalm 127.2) - "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence" (Psalm 115.17). From such isolated texts they teach the sleep of the soul until the last trump shall sound. Here, the question must be raised. Is soul sleep A DOCTRINE of Holy Scripture? The answer is NO. If these verses were expounded within their context then the true meaning would be plain to see, but extracted and placed in isolation of course they can be used for the basis of such a belief. Such use of the Scriptures is to handle the Word of God deceitfully. Indeed, "it changes the truth of God into a lie" (Cf. Rom.1.25).

Take as another example the great controversy surrounding the Romanist dogma of Transubstantiation. They maintain that the bread is the actual body of the Lord, and quote. "This is my body" (1 Cor.11.24). It is true that the text is there, and that is precisely what it says, but is the Romish interpretation correct? Is Transubstantiation the teaching of Holy Scripture? Of course not.

Neither can the issue which is before us, as to the EXTENT of the Atonement be settled by an appeal to such verses as. "God so loved the world" or "Christ died for all". Such expressions must be studied and held in keeping with the analogy of the Faith, and within the context of the doctrine of The Atonement.

If it be preached that the work of Redemption was designed for all, then it must necessarily be assumed that Christ's sacrifice procured for ALL SINNERS that quickening grace of

the Holy Spirit which is indispensable to salvation, and that the Mediator's work, both preceptive and penal, was for ALL ADAM'S RAGE, and that not only did the Redeemer finish and finalize the work for ALL, but God at the bar of Divine justice has accepted that as full and final payment. If this be true then reason demands that such preachers state the ultimate of their message, for it MUST be that ALL MEN ARE INFALLIBLY SAVED.

Yet, when Arminian gospellers are faced with the sheer logic of this, they will hedge and say, "Oh! I am not a UNIVERSALIST. But their very preaching is a fallacy, for they believe in a UNIVERSAL ATONEMENT, but they do not believe in UNIVERSAL SALVATION. They fervently speak of the finished work of Christ, and the efficacy of the blood, yet, their preaching is a denial of this. How can it be a finished work, accepted at the bar of Divine justice for those who at the end will stand before the Eternal Judge in their sins. How can the Blood of Christ be efficacious to all, if countless millions are assigned to the Lake of Fire? Such preachers should be reasonable, and either declare themselves UNIVERSALISTS or cease using EMPTY AND MEANINGLESS words which not only deceive souls, but also dishonour Christ.

The real issue in this, is not so much the scope of the Atonement, as the EFFICACY of it.

In an attempt to square the situation, men who preach Universal Atonement will often say. "There is a 'FULNESS' in the Atonement, but it is IF men believe." This proviso to the theory makes the efficacy and sufficiency of the Atonement conditional. Surely this is a contradiction in terms!

We are told that Christ has made satisfaction to God for the whole of Adam's race ON CONDITION that the whole of Adam's race believe. What then has happened to the doctrine of ELECTION? Further, this conditional aspect is not the easy matter which Arminian evangelists make it out to be. The Word of God represents man as ignorant, blind, spiritually in fetters, bound with chains, confined in a prison of absolute darkness: indeed DEAD in trespasses and sins; and that nothing short of sovereign, supernatural power can free him.

The story is told, of a wealthy philanthropist who once visited a dungeon in which a wretched captive had for many months lain bound in chains and fetters. Strongly Imprisoned was this man within secure walls and barred doors. Looking in through a small lattice, the only opening for light and air, the wealthy man looked at the hopeless spectacle and shouted aloud to the captive, that he had come with SUFFICIENT (note the word) gold for a RANSOM, on CONDITION that he (the captive) will shake off his chains, wrench open the door and quit his miserable position. Alas! exclaims the poor fellow, your kindness does not reach me, your offer is but a mockery: unless your ransom positively effects my DELIVERANCE, it is of no value to me.

All this talk of the SUFFICIENCY of the Atonement is only an EMPTY OFFER of salvation if it is made CONDITIONAL upon the action of fallen man; for man is totally unable.

So, we establish that Arminian preaching is defective as to its teaching regarding HUMAN DEPRAVITY: it is erroneous as to ELECTION: it is/gigantic nonsense as pertaining to THE ATONEMENT.

How different is the TRUE GOSPEL of Holy Scripture. "By the blood of Thy covenant I have sent forth the prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water" (Zech.9:11). By His life and death, the Lord Jesus has not only paid the ransom, but He has made the captives His own. He purchased them, they are His LEGAL POSSESSION, and with the arm of His power HE DELIVERS AND BRINGS THEM OUT. The Mediator is not only SAVIOUR, He is also THE DELIVERER. "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house" (Isaiah 42:6-7) - "He sent redemption unto His people: He hath commanded His covenant for ever; holy and reverend is His name" (Psalm 111:9).

The Scriptures infallibly teach 'PARTICULAR REDEMPTION.' He sends redemption to HIS PEOPLE (the elect). He does not OFFER IT TO ALL and leave it to depraved mortals to say YES or NO. If this was the case then the EXTENT of the

Atonement would be NIL for not a single soul would accept it.

The Christ which the Holy Scriptures reveal is an EFFICACIOUS REDEEMER and a SOVEREIGN EMANCIPATOR.

PART 5

Let us examine some of the principal verses which Arminians use in an attempt to give credence to their theory, commencing with John 3:16 and in particular the words: "That God so loved THE WORLD".

The first exercise in this controversy must be that we sit down with a concordance and check every reference in our Bible to the word 'world', and it is immediately apparent that this word is used in a variety of ways. For example: "If THE WORLD hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you" (John 15:18). This is not EVERYONE rather is it the WORLD OF UNBELIEVERS in view. Sometimes the word refers to the planet, sometimes to the people who inhabit the planet: "He was in the WORLD and the WORLD (planet) was made by Him and the WORLD (people) knew Him not" (Jn 1:10).

There are other instances where 'world' has reference to but a handful of people: "The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold THE WORLD is gone after Him" (John 12:19). This could have only applied to a few hundred people around Bethany and Jerusalem.

Very rarely in Scripture does the 'world' refer to ALL men of ALL generations, from Eden through to the end of time. By far the most common usage of the word in the New Testament is its reference to the Gentiles, in CONTRADISTINCTION to the Jews. Therefore, in focussing attention on John 3:16, we must be careful, as in all parts of the Word of God, to keep it within its context: we dare not wrench a statement out of its setting, or twist the meaning of a word which is used WITHIN A GIVEN CONNECTION.

"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). This is part of a long discourse which the Saviour had with A JEW on the subject of 'New Birth'; therefore, the verse must be read and explained against this backcloth. There is an unvarying rule of interpretation, that both definite and indefinite terms or phrases must be defined or explained in accordance with THE SUBJECT, about which they are employed, or used in connection with.

Unmistakably the subject of this verse is the LOVE OF GOD; but joined to the subject are the indefinite expressions WORLD and WHOSOEVER. The burning question with Arminians is, who are THE OBJECTS OF GOD'S LOVE? Before defining or explaining who are the objects, or persons concerned, it is necessary to make a detailed study of THE SUBJECT - The Love of God; for the indefinite term must only be defined within the context of the subject. Accordingly, we first ascertain what the Bible teaches concerning THE LOVE OF GOD

1. IT IS ETERNAL.

"The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." (Jer.31:3). "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world" (Eph.1:4).

2. IT PROCEEDS FROM GOD'S SPONTANEOUS WILL.

"The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the Lord loved you" Deut.7:7-8).

3. IT CANNOT BE INTERCEPTED OR SEVERED.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? ... For I am persuaded that nothing ... shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Cf. Rom.8:35-39).

4. IT IS IMMUTABLE.

"Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it" (Song of S.8:7).

5. IT IS SOVEREIGN.

"It is written Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Rom.9:13).

These five aspects of the love of God must be held entire, and BECAUSE of the nature of that love there are manifest effects. There is an INFALLIBLE CONNECTION between the love of God and the blessing of the OBJECTS of that love. ABSOLUTE RESULTS follow in the wake of God's love. The God of heaven works to a plan; He has a pattern, and an end in view, from which He does not deviate. "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation" (2 Thess.2:13) - "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the WORLD knoweth us not, because it knew Him not" (1 John 3.1).

Those LOVED of God are CHOSEN to salvation, they also, are CALLED to be sons. We must also register the fact that the term WORLD here in 1 John 3.1 is in no way within the range of God's love as pertaining to salvation; the love is UPON THE CATIED. Their CALLING is the certain and infallible consequence of a Sovereign, Eternal, and Immutable love. The teaching of Holy Scripture is, that the OBJECTS of God's love will be effectually "called", "made sons" and "partakers of His holiness".

And so we return to John 3.16, where the subject is THE LOVE OF GOD, with the indefinite expressions of WORLD and WHOSOEVER, which MUST be defined and explained within the orbit of that subject. We have now established that there is a DESIGN in God's love. Therefore, we bring this principle to bear on John 3.16 and we discover that the design is, that all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ shall have everlasting life, and that the number who believe, will come FROM all parts of the world (or planet) from among Gentiles as well as Jews. This is summed up perfectly in the "Inspired Book" by Caiaphas (who himself probably little knew the profound truth which he uttered): "... being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation; (Jews) and not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one THE CHILDREN OF GOD that were scattered abroad" (John 11:51-52) This can mean none other than the elect of God; those chosen in Christ; scattered abroad amongst both Jews and Gentiles; and Christ was to die for BOTH. to be "lifted up" just as: "Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up. that whosoever believeth

in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 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".

That is not UNIVERSAL ATONEMENT. The term 'world' here must be held within the context of our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus (a Jew). 'World' within this setting has special reference to the Gentiles, whom the Pharisees would have considered accursed. This reference to the world of Gentiles continues throughout the New Testaments "... On the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 10:45) - "... Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11.18) - "... declaring the conversion of the Gentiles" (Acts 15:3).

At this point certain questions arise: (i) Is the expression 'THE GENTILES' in these verses universal? (ii) Is it indefinite or absolute? (iii) Are ALL Gentiles granted repentance? (iv) Is the Holy Spirit poured out on ALL Gentiles? (v) Can ALL Gentiles be declared converted? To these questions the Word of God gives a straightforward and plain answer: "God....did visit the Gentiles to take OUT OF THEM a people for His name" (Acts 15:14). It is NOT universal; it is SOVEREIGNLY SELECTIVE.

In conclusion let it be stated, the popular interpretation of John 3:16 is repudiated by the very facts of history. First, take the record of the human race BEFORE Christ was born; unnumbered millions lived and died without God and without hope. The Old Testament declares: "The wicked should be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God" (Psalm 9s17). If they were all eternally and immutably loved, then where is the evidence of it? With reference to a later period in history, recall the 'Dark Ages'; not for 'a decade', nor for a 'generation', not even for a 'century', but for one thousand years the Bible was, to a very great degree, withheld. The Papacy dominated the major part of Europe, whilst other continents were in the darkness of heathenism. Over those long centuries, generations lived and died in abject darkness. Then, since the mighty work of God in the Protestant Reformation, right up to the present day, who can attempt to number the vast

multitudes that have lived and died in ignorance, never having heard of Christ or the gospel?

Is it not inexplicably strange that a SOVEREIGN, OMNIPOTENT GOD of ALL POWER should so love multitudes and yet has been unable to even convey that love to them, and so left them to die in ignorance?

Many Christians who read this will be saying: "I cannot reconcile this with the attribute of God's love". This, of course, cannot be done if one has such a faulty conception of the love of God. Men of the world are not so foolish as to propound such a theory as universal indiscriminate love, neither will they accept it if such be preached to them, for it is contrary to reason, as well as God's truth. Other Scriptures are equally as true as John 3.16. For example: "God in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways" (Acts 14.16). - "God gave them over to a reprobate mind" (Rom.1.28).

There are many other attributes within the Godhead beside that of Love, and one does not override the others. Each attribute is equally active and important. The Bible does not ask men to endeavour to reconcile these truths, let alone explain them away by inventing a universal love theory. We are to hold doctrine entire.

To summarize this section on God's love; the Scriptures teach that there is an INFALLIBLE CONNECTION between THE LOVE OF GOD and the blessing of THE OBJECTS~of that love.

PART 6

Attention must now be drawn to another text, which if removed from its setting and quoted in isolation, takes on a completely different meaning to that which the Spirit of God intended. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1.29). These words were spoken by John the Baptist. He was the herald of the Saviour, the forerunner, and the link between the Old and New Testaments. The old era was to be brought to a close and a

new ushered in. The ritual of ceremonial offerings was to give place to ONE offering which would FOREVER take away sin. The One whom all the Old Testament scriptures typified was about to be revealed, and His coming, and the offering of Himself, would mark the end of the old Tabernacle and Temple economy.

John the Baptist was the man raised up by God for the mammoth task of preparing the way for this new order which would mark the end of the old. His coming was prophesied over seven hundred years before he was born, by Isaiah: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord" (Isaiah 40:3), and later by Malachi: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant" (Mal.3:1).

The prophecies find their fulfilment in 'the Baptist'. "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight" (Matt.3:1-3). This is the same man who spoke the words of John 1:29.

One of the leading distinctions between the Old Testament order and the New was with regard to ITS SCOPE. The Old Testament era was one of great restriction. For the two thousand years which immediately preceded John's appearance, spiritual revelation was almost exclusively confined to one single nation. To this limitation the people of God of that age were thoroughly accustomed: they knew no other: indeed they would have no other. However, the new era about to dawn was totally different. It was, in fact, of an opposite order; for the middle wall of partition by which Jew and Gentile had been kept separate for many generations, was to be broken down. Henceforth, there would be NO DIFFERENCE between Jew or Greek, Bond or Free. However, the previous order of exclusive privilege which the Jews had enjoyed had produced a bias and a prejudice which would be no easy thing to break down: so as we enter the Gospel era we are about to step from one economy into the other; hut first we are confronted with

this great man, John the Baptist, who had such an arduous mission of PREPARING THE WAY, heralding forth the NEW ORDER: "John here witness of Him ... for the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:15-17). As we view this heaven-sent diplomat preparing the way for the new economy, we hear him say in one of his discourses: "All flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Luke 3s6). Strange words indeed to fall upon the ears of favoured Jews!

Then, one day Christ appeared in John's audience and he immediately publicly identified Him by saying: "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Let the question be faced honestly by those who quote this text in support of their Arminian theory: Is the Holy Spirit setting forth UNIVERSAL ATONEMENT through John the Baptist? Was that the object of this great man's mission? If so, then it is evident that both the ministry of the herald and of the One heralded has NOT succeeded, for the sin of the WORLD is NOT taken away, and neither has ALL flesh seen the salvation of God.

No! the mission of John was to announce the advent of Christ who had come to accomplish that which the ceremonial law given by Moses did but typify. Now, further truth was being revealed through John: more of the eternal counsel was being unfolded. The one great sacrifice for sins forever was soon to be made. This would be an EFFICACIOUS offering. By the ONE offering Christ would perfect forever THEM that are sanctified; that is THOSE that were set apart by God from all eternity. Who were they? Jews? In the main it had been so until this point in human history, but now, very soon after Calvary and the coming of the Holy Spirit, Luke states: "It shall come to pass that WHOSOEVER shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21).

John was not preaching UNIVERSAL ATONEMENT at Bethabara, rather was he declaring that the outside world of Gentiles was also included in God's election of grace. This is in perfect harmony with our Lord's words (referred to in a previous article) - "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold them also I must bring" (John 10:16).

To remove John 1:29 from its context and to impose upon it a literalism which is absolute, is both crass and

illogical; for when John the Baptist announced Christ as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, a vast number of the human race were already in hell; this fact alone PRECLUDES ABSOLUTELY the thought that the term WORLD in this verse is the whole of Adam's posterity. It would be more foolish still, and totally beyond the bounds of reason, to say that EVERYONE of those incarcerated in darkness had heard the message of salvation and rejected it.

The words of Christ himself are clear, and He leaves us in NO DOUBT, that He DID NOT take away the sin of ALL. To men with whom He came into contact in that generation, He said: "Ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). To the Pharisees He said: "Your sin remaineth" (John 9.41): Are the Saviour's own words at variance with John's? Of course not! The truth is that such words as John 1:29 have been taken out of their framework; consequently, they have taken on a meaning which opposes the true teaching of Atonement: for Atonement is 'Particular' and NOT UNIVERSAL.

The finest commentary ever written on John 1:29 is Revelation 5.9: "Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation". That is the sequel to the Baptist's announcement; the Lamb was slain and A PEOPLE have been redeemed unto God by His blood OUT OF every kindred and tongue and people and nation.

If Arminian theology is right and John 1:29 taken literally and made ABSOLUTE then Revelation 5.9 must be reworded to state that the Lamb was slain and EVERY kindred and tongue and people HAVE BEEN redeemed unto God by His blood. When analysed, what nonsense such preaching is seen to be.

PART 7

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3.9).

This is a verse which Arminians hide behind as a formidable fortress. They say: "here it is stated that the Lord is not willing that ANY should perish but that ALL should come to repentance". If this Scripture is to be taken in the sense in which it is presented by so many loose preachers, then, any thinking person must conclude that the will of God is being thwarted, His purpose frustrated and THE DEVIL IS WINNING; for to talk about ALL MEN coming to repentance is absurd, because VERY FEW ARE. They have always been in the minority: it is but a few who are saved. THE MANY are on the BROAD ROAD, according to the Lord's own words.

How then can this verse be explained? The key to the question is as always; keep it within its setting then it will present no problem. Uproot these verses, and not only are difficulties created, but the TRUTH OF GOD can be turned into A LIE. It is a FEARFUL thing to so mishandle the Word of TRUTH.

Who is addressed in this section of Scripture? This we are told in the previous verse: "Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3.8). The Spirit of God is addressing 'THE BELOVED'. The subject of this chapter is the 'Second Advent' - 'The promise of His coming'. Compare verse 4 which the SCOFFERS suppose will never be fulfilled (Cf. verse 3): However, the Holy Spirit instructs THE BELOVED in order that THEY be not ignorant. It will be fulfilled, they are told, but God is longsuffering to USWARD. Who then are the 'usward'? THE SCOFFERS? No.' It is THE BELOVED, and God is not willing that ANY OF THESE should perish; and they NEVER will, because it is not THE WILL OF GOD. Throughout these articles it has been clear from the Scriptures that ALL things pertaining to salvation are: "after the counsel of HIS OWN WILL".

The reason why God has not sent His Son back to this earth in judgment is that the number of "His elect" - "His beloved", is not yet accomplished. Those chosen from before the foundation of the world, loved with an everlasting love, are "His beloved". Never are the reprobate addressed in this way. EVERY ONE of those predestined to glory WILL COME to repentance BEFORE human history can be wound, up.

When the last chosen one is regenerated THEN the day of the Lord WILL come as a thief in the night.

The ANY in 2 Peter 3:9 does not refer to ALL men in general. It has reference to USWARD - THE ELECT - THE BELOVED - THE PEOPLE OF HIS CHOICE; That number which He loved from all eternity; and God will NOT break in upon this scene in judgment, however rebellious and godless this world may become, until ALL that company are effectually called, for not ANY of THAT NUMBER will perish.

Put the Arminian interpretation to this Scripture, that ANY means ALL MEN in an absolute sense, then the scoffers of verses 3 and 4 are correct: - "All things will continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" - The Lord will NEVER return. If their theory is right, God will never deal in judgment, for He is not willing that any should perish. So, verse 10 which states: "that the day of the Lord WILL come ... with the elements melting with fervent heat, the earth also and the works therein being burnt up", can be eliminated from our Bibles: IT WILL NEVER HAPPEN. This is the only conclusion which can logically be drawn from such an interpretation. What a travesty of TRUTH is produced by faulty interpretation.

PART 8

There is one other aspect to which attention should be drawn and that is the use of the word ALL in some verses of Holy Scripture, for example: "Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (1 Tim.2:6). To make this verse mean that Christ died in the stead of ALL people of ALL ages, without exception, is to create yet further absurdities and do despite to the doctrine of Atonement. There is no part of Scripture which would oblige us to give to the ALL in this verse and other similar verses an UNLIMITED and ABSOLUTE MEANING.

The word ALL like WORLD is employed in the Word of God with considerable latitude. Take as an example the verse which states; "and there went out unto him (John the

Baptist) all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river Jordon confessing their sins" (Mark 1:5). If the word ALL is taken literally and in an absolute sense then we must conclude that not a single person was left unbaptized in all Judea and Jerusalem. Later, however, we read in Luke 7:30 "But the Pharisees and Lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him (John)". Is this a contradiction? Indeed not. It is an absurdity caused by persons who lay TOTAL stress on one word, making the little word ALL absolute, when what is actually to be understood is, that from all over the land of Judea and from every part of the city of Jerusalem, men went out to Jordon and were baptized of John.

Let the Scriptures produce further evidence: "and ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake (Matt.10:22). This was spoken to 'the twelve'; but are we to understand by this that ALL men of every generation HATE the Lord's chosen apostles? - "All men come to Him" (John 3:26), That is the Saviour, DO THEY? - "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32): Here the Lord himself is referring to His death, and He says, after I have been lifted up on the cross I will draw ALL men unto me. Does the 'universal atonement' preacher REALLY believe what he is saying when he makes these 'ALLS' limitless and absolute? If so, then atonement has been far from successful, for comparatively few are drawn. The work of the Mediator has proved to be very disappointing.

PERISH such God dishonouring preaching. Let the sacred Word of God interpret itself. The ALL men whom the Saviour draws in John 12:32 axe the ALL that the Father giveth me, in John 6:37: All THAT number SHALL come to me, saith Christ. Within THIS circle the word ALL is absolute, for here we are speaking within the orbit of ELECTION: we are within the scope of "THE EVERLASTING COVENANT" "which is ordered in ALL things and SURE". Hence, within this area we can categorically state: ALL axe ransomed: ALL will be drawn: ALL will come: ALL will be saved: ALL will be glorified. NEVER in Holy Writ will one come up against a contradiction or create an absurdity by so affirming.

Preach PARTICULAR REDEMPTION and there are no loose ends; all truth will dove-tail perfectly. Preach UNIVERSAL ATONEMENT and nothing fits.

That there is UNIVERSALITY with regard to the proclamation of the gospel, we heartily agree: it is to ALL nations: ALL the world. The efficacy of the work of atonement is to men of ALL ages - Abel, Abraham, David, Peter, Paul, Luther, Bunyan, Whitefield, and includes men of all nations whether Jew or Gentile: we in our generation also, and so right up to the end of time. It is in this RELATIVE sense that the Scriptures use these UNIVERSAL terms.

The writer is aware that there are certain exceptions, for example: "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom.3:23). Here the All, is ABSOLUTE: it is sweeping, embracing every child of Adam. Why should this be? some may ask. The answer is that it perfectly ties in with the DOCTRINE of sin. Sin is UNIVERSAL in an absolute sense. "In Adam all die" (1 Cor.15:22). The ALL here includes every one of mankind.

"In Christ shall all be made alive". This ALL does NOT include every member of the race. Why the difference? It is because the doctrine of Election and Particular Redemption comes in here. Those 'IN CHRIST' are CHOSEN (Cf. Eph.1:4)

Just as the ALL in the first part of 1 Cor.15:22 must be interpreted within the context of the WHOLE of Divine revelation concerning SIN, which is ALL EMBRACING, so must the second part of that verse be interpreted within the framework of the WHOLE of the truth pertaining to ATONEMENT, which is PARTICULAR. No isolated text must ever be used to contradict the overall doctrine.

Is it not a lack of grounding in 'THE FAITH' which has led to the confused preaching of past generations? It was not without reason that the Holy Spirit has stated that an elder in the church of God is not to be a NOVICE (Cf. 1 Tim.3:6). Those who minister the Word of God are to "Speak the things which become SOUND DOCTRINE" - (Cf. Titus 2:1).

To say that The Atonement has made the salvation of all men possible may sound very plausible and it may be an easy way of presenting it, but it is NOT the truth of Holy Scripture. It is a theory of man, which when scrutinized is not only meaningless jargon, it is anti-Biblical, for such an assertion completely ignores the SOVEREIGN FLECTION of the Father and it makes a shambles of the EFFICACY OF THE WORK OF CHRIST and it is a denial of the INVINCIBLE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. Furthermore, it is a repudiation of the TOTAL DEPRAVITY of man. It is a grievous and God dishonouring distortion of truth. Those who profess to be magnifying God's grace by widening the EXTENT of the Atonement are in actual fact compromising its dread reality, and shattering its efficacy.

To say that atonement was made for all men, and now everything hinges upon the sinner's acceptance, is to affirm that Christ has done nothing more for those who are saved than He did for those who are lost. Can anyone who REALLY thinks this subject through EVER believe such a thing? It is NOT faith which gives efficacy to the Blood of Christs it is NOT our belief which makes the work of Christ efficacious. It is the atonement wrought by the Mediator in all it's INTRINSIC WORTH AND POWER which was EFFICACIOUS to purchase faith which was imparted to us by the invincible and infallible working of God the Holy Spirit, so that: "By grace ye are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Eph.2:8).

Whilst there are probably other verses which may appear difficult to some, the writer feels sufficient has been said; for in the main, the confusion is fairly uniform, in that it centres around the emphasis placed upon the two words 'WORLD' and 'ALL', and the taking of verses out of context in order to substantiate a theory, which when examined, is seen to be at variance with the Biblical doctrine of Atonement.

W. H. Molland.

REDEEMING THE TIME

The apostle Paul addresses the Christians at Ephesus with these stirring words? "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."

In these evil days it is necessary for those of us who are members in the churches of Christ to redeem the time. This means that we must use wisdom in the proper use of our time, especially in relation to the life and witness of the church, giving due attention to the gospel, worship and evangelism.

The churches of our land are undergoing a profound crisis of confidence at the present time. The crisis is to do with the nature of the Christian Faith, and its fundamental doctrines. Many church leaders, and others, deny, distort; or disregard these doctrines of the Faith.

The crisis has occurred because of unbelief and the influence of secular humanism. This influence is so pervasive in our modern society that it has deeply affected the life and witness of the churches. Human reason has replaced divine revelation as the ultimate authority in the ministry of many churches, and in the lives of vast numbers of church members.

If we are to redeem the time, we must address ourselves to this crisis situation, for it shows no sign of being resolved, and is a continuing threat to the life and witness of the churches.

The crisis will only be resolved when the churches turn from the social gospel, charismatic worship and entertainment evangelism to the historic Christian Faith and the fundamental doctrines of Biblical Christianity.

It is imperative, a matter of the greatest urgency, that we should acknowledge the revealed will of God in Scripture, and seek to understand the Lord's will concerning our church life, our family life, and our life in society.

The days are evil and we are to redeem the time. The only way by which the churches will again influence society for good and for God is through personal and corporate obedience to the revealed will of God.

As Paul declares to the Christians of Galatia: "Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

May the Lord enable us to discern His will and to redeem the time.

H. W. Roberts (Minister -
Clarence Street Baptist
Church, Penzance)

"Let there be no compromise, no barter of the truth; buy it at any sacrifice of human opinion, sell it at no price whatsoever. 'Buy the truth sell it not' (Prov.23:23).

Set up a witness of the truth humbly, boldly, and in the strength of the Lord wherever His providence may place you. O consider the honour of being permitted to testify to the truth as it is in Jesus! You may be a lone, a solitary witness, yet fear not; He who is the truth itself says, to you, as He did to the church in Philadelphia - "Thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." (Rev.3:10-11)

Octavius Winslow.

"Tell ye your children of it, and your children their children, and their children another generation." (Joel 1:3)

In this simple way, by God's grace, a living testimony for truth is always to be kept alive in the land - the beloved of the Lord are to hand down their witness for the gospel, and the covenant to their heirs, and these again to their next descendants. This is our first duty, we are to begin at the family hearth: he is a bad preacher who does not commence his ministry at home. The heathen are to be sought by all means, and the highways and the hedges are to be searched, but home has a prior claim, and woe unto those who reverse the order of the Lord's arrangements. To teach our children is a personal duty; we cannot delegate it to Sunday School Teachers, or other friendly aids, these can assist us, but cannot deliver us from the sacred obligation; proxies and sponsors are wicked devices in this case: mothers and fathers must, like Abraham, command their households in the fear of God, and talk with their offspring concerning the wondrous works of the Most High.

Parental teaching is a natural duty - who so fit to look to the child's well-being as those who are the authors of his actual being? To neglect the instruction of our offspring is worse than brutish. Family religion is necessary for the nation, for the family itself, and for the church of God. By a thousand plots Popery is covertly advancing in our land, and one of the most effectual means for resisting its inroads is left almost neglected, namely, the instruction of children in the faith. Would that parents would awaken to a sense of the importance of this matter. It is a pleasant duty to talk of Jesus to our sons and daughters, and the more so because it has often proved to be an accepted work, for God has saved the children through the parents' prayers and admonitions. May every house into which these words come honour the Lord and receive His smile?

C. H. Spurgeon

EDITORIAL.

The January-March edition of 'THE LINK' carried an article on 'HUMAN DEPRAVITY', this was followed by one on 'ELECTION' in April-June. Then, in the July-September issue the subject of 'THE EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT' was opened up, which, as intimated Iasi time would be continued in this edition.

The response to these articles from different parts of the Country has been very encouraging. Appreciation has been warmly expressed by some, and many questions have been asked by others.

Whilst it was the intention to continue with the subject, in view of the interest and enquiries, which reveal the dilemma which some of God's people are in today, it was decided that this matter of the 'EXTENT' be more fully elaborated upon than was at first intended, giving particular emphasis to verses which present difficulties to some. Because of this, our magazine this time is larger than usual, and contains, mainly, one theme. It is not our intention of making a practice of this, but at this point it is obvious that a need is being met.

As was announced in the last edition, our brother Mr. Bridge, has gone to be with his Lord. The funeral was at the chapel on the 10th June 1985. Mr. Bridge was a dynamic personality among us and his presence is greatly missed. Our prayers continue for Mrs. Bridge and the family.

On the 5th July 1985 another esteemed member, Mr. Hyam, was laid to rest. He had been in failing health for some years but had showed much grace and fortitude in his affliction. Such a cheerful person as our brother Mr. Hyam certainly leaves a blank in our midst. Again, we assure our dear sister Mrs. Hyam of our support and love in the Lord.