

Systematic Theology 3.3.2

The Offices of Christ

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*Part Three: The Doctrine of the Person and Work of Christ — Section 3.2: The
Offices of Christ*

Editorial note

The text has been updated to UK English; gloss boxes have been added to explain technical terms; summaries have been included; and questions for further study have been added. We have also included a master outline with the part represented in this volume shown in bold.

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Berkhof's Systematic Theology: Master Outline

This six-part guide is designed for use at the beginning of each volume. The part represented in this volume is shown in bold.

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The Offices of Christ

V. Divergent Theories of the Atonement

Theories of the atonement differ according to what they say Christ's death accomplishes. Berkhof tests each view by the Scriptural teaching that Christ satisfies divine justice for sinners.

Since the atonement is clearly something objective, something that has a Godward direction, strictly speaking only those theories can come into consideration here that represent the work of Christ as intended primarily to ward off the wrath of God and divine punishment from sinners rather than to change the sinner's attitude to God from one of hostility to one of friendship. Theories that are entirely subjective and conceive of the work of Christ exclusively as bearing on the sinner's moral condition might, in strict logic, be left out of consideration altogether. They might conceivably be considered as theories of reconciliation, but can hardly be regarded as theories of atonement. Miley argues that there really can be no more than two theories of atonement. He points out that the atonement, as an objective ground for the forgiveness

of sins, must answer to a necessity which will naturally determine its nature. This necessity must lie, either in the requirement of an absolute justice which must punish sin, or in the rectoral office of justice as an obligation to conserve the interests of moral government. In the first case one arrives at the satisfaction theory; in the second, at the governmental theory, which is preferred by Miley and finds great favor with the Methodists in general. Alfred Cave ascribes an objective character also to the theory of the early Arminians, in which the death of Christ is regarded as a substitute for the penalty imposed on sinners; and to the theory of McLeod Campbell, which finds the real significance of the work of Christ in His vicarious repentance. And it is undoubtedly true that both of these do contain an objective element. But in addition to these there are several purely subjective theories. Though these are not, strictly speaking, theories of atonement, yet they call for consideration, since they are considered as such in many circles. The following are the most important theories:

A. THEORIES OF THE EARLY CHURCH.

GLOSS Atonement theories: attempts to explain how Christ's work deals with sin and restores sinners to God.

There were two theories in the early Church that call for brief mention.

1. THE RANSOM-TO-SATAN THEORY. This is based on the singular notion that the death of Christ constituted a ransom paid to Satan, in order to cancel the just claims which the latter had on man. Origen, one of the chief advocates of this theory, held that Satan was deceived in the bargain, since the outcome proved that he could not stand in the presence of the holy Christ, and was not able to retain his hold on Him. This theory found favor with several of the early Church Fathers, though they did not always state it in exactly the same form. It proved to be rather tenacious, for the echo of it was still heard in the

days of Anselm. Yet it was found to be so incongruous that it gradually disappeared for lack of intelligent support. Mackintosh speaks of this theory as the exoteric theory of the early Church.

2. THE RECAPITULATION THEORY. Irenæus, who also expresses the idea that the death of Christ satisfied the justice of God and thus liberated man, nevertheless gave great prominence to the recapitulation theory, that is, to the idea, as Orr expresses it, “that Christ recapitulates in Himself all the stages of human life, including those which belong to our state as sinners.” By His incarnation and human life He reverses the course on which Adam by his sin started humanity and thus becomes a new leaven in the life of mankind. He communicates immortality to those who are united to Him by faith and effects an ethical transformation in their lives, and by His obedience compensates for the disobedience of Adam. This, according to Mackintosh, was the esoteric theory of the early Church.

B. THE SATISFACTION THEORY OF ANSELM (COMMERCIAL THEORY).

GLOSS Satisfaction: the meeting of God’s righteous claims; Anselm connects it especially with the honour due to God.

The theory of Anselm is sometimes identified with that of the Reformers, which is also known as the satisfaction theory, but the two are not identical. Some seek to prejudice others against it by calling it “the commercial theory.” Anselm stressed the absolute necessity of the atonement by grounding it in the very nature of God. According to him sin consists in the creature’s withholding from God the honor which is His due. By the sin of man God was robbed of His honor, and it was necessary that this should be vindicated. This could be done in either of two ways: by punishment or by satisfaction. The mercy of God prompted Him to seek it in the way of satisfaction, and more

particularly through the gift of His Son, which was the only way, since an infinite satisfaction was required. Christ rendered obedience to the law, but since this was nothing more than His duty as man, it did not constitute any merit on His part. In addition to that, however, He also suffered and died in the performance of His duty; and since He as a sinless being was under no obligation to suffer and to die, He thus brought infinite glory to God. This was a work of supererogation on the part of Christ, which merited, and also brought, a reward; but since Christ as the Son of God needed nothing for Himself, the reward was passed on to sinners in the form of the forgiveness of sins and of future blessedness for all those who live according to the commandments of the gospel. Anselm was the first to work out a rather complete doctrine of the atonement, and in many respects his theory points in the right direction. However, it is open to several points of criticism.

1. It is not consistent in its representation of the necessity of the atonement. It ostensibly does not ground this necessity in the justice of God which cannot brook sin, but in the honor of God which calls for amends or reparation. He really starts out with the principle of “private law” or custom, according to which an injured party may demand whatever satisfaction he sees fit; and yet argues for the necessity of the atonement in a way which only holds on the standpoint of public law.

2. This theory really has no place for the idea that Christ by suffering endured the penalty of sin, and that His suffering was strictly vicarious. The death of Christ is merely a tribute offered voluntarily to the honor of the Father. It constitutes a supererogatory merit, compensating for the demerits of others; and this is really the Roman Catholic doctrine of penance applied to the work of Christ.

3. The scheme is also one-sided and therefore insufficient in that it bases redemption exclusively on the death of Christ, conceived as a material contribution to the honor of God, and excludes the active obedience of Christ as a contributing factor to His atoning work. The whole emphasis is on the

death of Christ, and no justice is done to the redemptive significance of His life.

4. In Anselm's representation there is merely an external transfer of the merits of Christ to man. It contains no indication of the way in which the work of Christ for man is communicated to man. There is no hint of the mystical union of Christ and believers, nor of faith as accepting the righteousness of Christ. Since the whole transaction appears to be rather commercial, the theory is often called the commercial theory.

C. THE MORAL INFLUENCE THEORY.

GLOSS Moral influence: the view that Christ's death chiefly changes the sinner's heart by displaying divine love.

This theory was first advocated by Abelard in opposition to Anselm, and since his day found many ardent supporters. The fundamental idea is always the same, though it has assumed different forms at the hands of such men as Young, Maurice, Bushnell, Stevens, David Smith, and many others. The fundamental idea is that there is no principle of the divine nature which necessarily calls for satisfaction on the part of the sinner; and that the death of Christ should not be regarded as an expiation for sin. It was merely a manifestation of the love of God, suffering in and with His sinful creatures, and taking upon Himself their woes and griefs. This suffering did not serve to satisfy the divine justice, but to reveal the divine love, so as to soften human hearts and to lead them to repentance. It assures sinners that there is no obstacle on the part of God which would prevent Him from pardoning their sins. Not only can He do this without receiving satisfaction, but He is even eager to do it. The only requirement is that sinners come to Him with penitent hearts. The following objections may be urged against this theory:

1. This theory is contrary to the plain teachings of Scripture, which represents the atoning work of Christ as necessary, not primarily to reveal the love of God, but to satisfy His justice; regards the sufferings and death of Christ as propitiatory and penal; and teaches that the sinner is not susceptible to the moral influence of the sacrificial work of Christ until the righteousness of Christ has become his own by faith.

2. While it is undoubtedly true that the cross of Christ was the supreme manifestation of the love of God, it can be regarded as such only from the point of view of the penal substitutionary doctrine of the atonement, according to which the sufferings and death of Christ were absolutely necessary for the salvation of sinners. But according to the moral influence theory they merely served the purpose of making an impression on man, which God might have done in many other ways; and therefore were not necessary. And if they were not necessary, they were indeed a cruel manifestation of God's love, — a contradiction in terms. The sufferings and death of Christ were a manifestation of God's love only, if it was the only way to save sinners.

3. This theory robs the atonement of its objective character, and thereby ceases to be a real theory of the atonement. It is at most only a one-sided theory of reconciliation. In fact, it is not even that, for subjective reconciliation is only possible on the basis of an objective reconciliation. It really confounds God's method of saving man with man's experience of being saved, by making the atonement itself to consist in its effects in the life of the believer, in union with Christ.

4. Finally, this theory fails on its own principle. It is undoubtedly true that necessary suffering, that is, suffering for some saving purpose which could not be realized in any other way, is apt to make a deep impression. But the effect of a voluntary suffering, which is entirely unnecessary and uncalled for, is quite different. As a matter of fact, it is disapproved by the Christian conscience.

D. THE EXAMPLE THEORY.

This theory was advocated by the Socinians in the sixteenth century, in opposition to the doctrine of the Reformers, that Christ vicariously atoned for the sin of mankind. Its fundamental principle is, that there is no retributive justice in God which requires absolutely and inexorably that sin be punished. His justice does not prevent Him from pardoning whom He will without demanding any satisfaction. The death of Christ did not atone for sin, neither did it move God to pardon sin. Christ saves men by revealing to them the way of faith and obedience as the way of eternal life, by giving them an example of true obedience both in His life and in His death, and by inspiring them to lead a similar life. This view really establishes no direct connection between the death of Christ and the salvation of sinners. Yet it holds that the death of Christ may be said to expiate the sins of man in view of the fact that Christ, as a reward for His obedience unto death, received power to bestow eternal life on believers. This theory is objectionable for various reasons.

1. It is really a revival and concoction of several ancient heresies: of Pelagianism, with its denial of human depravity and its assertion of the natural ability of man to save himself; of the adoptionist doctrine, with its belief that the man Christ was adopted to be the Messianic Son of God on account of His obedience; of the Scotist doctrine of an arbitrary will in God; and of the emphasis of some of the early Church Fathers on the saving efficacy of the example of Christ. Consequently it is open to all the objections that militate against these views.

2. It is entirely un-Scriptural in its conception of Christ as a mere man of exceptional qualities; in its view of sin, in which the character of sin as guilt, so strongly emphasized by the Word of God, is entirely ignored; in its one-sided emphasis on the redemptive significance of the life of Christ; and in its representation of the death of Christ as a martyr's death, while failing to account for the unmartyrlike anguish of Christ on the cross.

3. It fails to account for the salvation of those who lived before the incarnation and of infants. If the life and sufferings of Christ merely save men by their exemplary character, the question naturally arises, how they who lived prior to the coming of Christ, and they who die in infancy can derive any benefit from them. Yet there is clear Scriptural evidence for the fact that the work of Christ was also retrospective in its efficacy, and that little children also share in the benefits of His atoning death.

4. Moreover, while it is perfectly true that Christ is also represented as an example in Scripture, He is nowhere represented as an example after which unbelieving sinners must pattern, and which will save them if they do; and yet this is the necessary assumption of the theory under consideration. The example of Christ is one which only His people can follow, and to which even they can make but a slight approach. He is our Redeemer before He can be our example.

E. THE GOVERNMENTAL THEORY.

GLOSS **Governmental theory:** the view that Christ's suffering upholds moral government rather than bearing the exact penalty of sin.

The governmental theory was intended to be a mean between the doctrine of the atonement, as taught by the Reformers, and the Socinian view. It denies that the justice of God necessarily demands that all the requirements of the law be met. The law is merely the product of God's will, and He can alter or even abrogate it, just as He pleases. While in strict justice the sinner deserved eternal death, that sentence is not strictly executed, for believers are set free. For them the penalty is set aside, and that without strict satisfaction. Christ did indeed render a certain satisfaction, but this was only a nominal equivalent of the penalty due to man; something which God was pleased to accept as such. If the question is asked, why God did not remit the penalty outright, as

He might have done, the answer is that He had to reveal in some way the inviolable nature of the law and His holy displeasure against sin, in order that He, the moral Ruler of the universe, might be able to maintain His moral government. This theory, first advocated by Grotius, was adopted by Wardlaw and several New England theologians, and is also supported in such recent works as those of Dale, A. Cave, Miley, Creighton, and others. It is open to the following objections:

1. It clearly rests upon certain false principles. According to it the law is not an expression of the essential nature of God, but only of His arbitrary will, and is therefore subject to change; and the aim of the so-called penalty is not to satisfy justice, but only to deter men from future offenses against the law.

2. While it may be said to contain a true element, namely, that the penalty inflicted on Christ is also instrumental in securing the interests of the divine government, it makes the mistake of substituting for the main purpose of the atonement one which can, in the light of Scripture, only be regarded as a subordinate purpose.

3. It gives an unworthy representation of God. He originally threatens man, in order to deter him from transgression, and does not execute the threatened sentence, but substitutes something else for it in the punishment inflicted on Christ. And now He again threatens those who do not accept Christ. But how is it possible to have any assurance that He will actually carry out His threat?

4. It is also contrary to Scripture, which certainly represents the atonement of Christ as a necessary revelation of the righteousness of God, as an execution of the penalty of the law, as a sacrifice by which God is reconciled to the sinner, and as the meritorious cause of the salvation of sinners.

5. Like the moral influence and the example theories, it also fails to explain how the Old Testament saints were saved. If the punishment inflicted on Christ was merely for the purpose of deterring men from sin, it had no retroactive significance. How then were people saved under the old

dispensation; and how was the moral government of God maintained at that time?

6. Finally, this theory, too, fails on its own principle. A real execution of the penalty might make a profound impression on the sinner, and might act as a real deterrent, if man's sinning or not sinning were, even in his natural state, merely contingent on the human will, which it is not; but such an impression would hardly be made by a mere sham exhibition of justice, designed to show God's high regard for the law.

F. THE MYSTICAL THEORY.

The mystical theory has this in common with the moral influence theory, that it conceives of the atonement exclusively as exercising influence on man and bringing about a change in him. At the same time it differs from the moral influence theory in that it conceives of the change wrought in man, not primarily as an ethical change in the conscious life of man, but as a deeper change in the subconscious life which is brought about in a mystical way. The basic principle of this theory is that, in the incarnation, the divine life entered into the life of humanity, in order to lift it to the plane of the divine. Christ possessed human nature with its inborn corruption and predisposition to moral evil; but through the influence of the Holy Spirit He was kept from manifesting this corruption in actual sin, gradually purified human nature, and in His death completely extirpated this original depravity and reunited that nature to God. He entered the life of mankind as a transforming leaven, and the resulting transformation constitutes His redemption. This is in effect, though with differences of detail, the theory of Schleiermacher, Edward Irving, Menken, and Stier. Even Kohlbruegge seemed inclined to accept it in a measure. It is burdened, however, with the following difficulties:

1. It takes no account of the guilt of man. According to Scripture the guilt of man must be removed, in order that he may be purified of his pollution; but the mystical theory, disregarding the guilt of sin, concerns itself only with the

expulsion of the pollution of sin. It knows of no justification, and conceives of salvation as consisting in subjective sanctification.

2. It rests upon false principles, where it finds in the natural order of the universe an exhaustive expression of the will and nature of God, regards sin exclusively as a power of moral evil in the world, which involves no guilt and deserves no punishment, and looks upon punishment as a mere reaction of the law of the universe against the transgressor, and not at all as a revelation of the personal wrath of God against sin.

3. It contradicts Scripture where it makes Christ share in the pollution of sin and hereditary depravity, and deduces the necessity of His death from the sinfulness of His own nature (not all do this). By doing this, it makes it impossible to regard Him as the sinless Saviour who, just because of His sinlessness, could take the place of sinners and pay the penalty for them.

4. It has no answer to the question, how those who lived before the incarnation can share in the redemption of Jesus Christ. If Christ in some realistic way drove out the pollution of sin during the time of His sojourn on earth, and now continues to drive it out; and if the salvation of man depends on this subjective process, how then could the Old Testament saints share in this salvation?

G. THE THEORY OF VICARIOUS REPENTANCE.

This theory of McLeod Cambell is also called the theory of sympathy and identification. It proceeds on the gratuitous assumption that a perfect repentance would have availed as a sufficient atonement for sin, if man had only been capable of an adequate repentance, which he was not. Now Christ offered to God, in behalf of humanity, the requisite repentance, and by so doing fulfilled the conditions of forgiveness. His work really consisted in the vicarious confession of sin in behalf of man. The question naturally arises, how the death of Christ is related to this vicarious repentance and confession. And

the answer is that Christ, by His suffering and death, entered sympathetically into the Father's condemnation of sin, brought out the heinousness of sin and condemned sin; and this was viewed by the Father as a perfect confession of our sins. This condemnation of sin is also calculated to produce in man that holiness which God demands of sinful humanity. This theory labors under the following difficulties.

1. It can readily be understood that Christ as man could enter sympathetically into our afflictions and temptations, and into the feeling of our infirmities; but it is not at all clear how the incarnation enabled Him to enter into a fellow-feeling with us with respect to our sins. He was sinless, a total stranger to sin as a corrupting power in His life, and therefore could hardly identify Himself in a moral sense with sinners.
2. While it may be admitted that, according to Scripture, Christ did sympathize with the sinners whom He came to save, this sympathy is certainly not represented as being the whole or even the most important part of His redemptive work. All the emphasis is on the fact that He vicariously endured the penalties that were due to sinners and met the requirements of the law in a life of obedience. Yet this theory, while recognizing the retributive justice of God and the demerit of sin, denies the necessity and possibility of penal substitution, and asserts that the work of Christ in behalf of sinners consisted, not in His suffering for them, but in the vicarious confession of their sins.
3. The theory proceeds on erroneous principles, namely, that sin does not necessarily make men liable to punishment; that the justice and holiness of God did not, as a matter of course, call for an objective atonement; and that the only necessity for redemptive help followed from the inability of man to repent in true fashion.
4. Finally, a vicarious confession, such as this theory implies, is really a contradiction in terms. Confession is something altogether subjective, and to

be valid must be personal. It is the outcome of a personal consciousness of sin, and is also personal in its effects. It is hard to see how such a vicarious repentance can release others from the obligation to repent. Moreover, this theory has no Scriptural foundation.

VI. The Purpose and Extent of the Atonement

The atonement removes the barrier of sin and secures the blessings of salvation. Its saving design is particular: Christ died to save His elect effectively and certainly.

A. THE PURPOSE OF THE ATONEMENT.

GLOSS Purpose of atonement: Christ's work satisfies God's justice, removes sin's barrier, and obtains salvation for His people.

The atonement was destined to affect the relation of God to the sinner, the state and condition of Christ as the Mediatorial author of salvation, and the state and condition of the sinner.

1. ITS EFFECT WITH REFERENCE TO GOD. It should be emphasized first of all that the atonement effected no change in the inner being of God, which is unchangeable. The only change that was brought about was a change in the relation of God to the objects of His atoning love. He was reconciled to those who were the objects of His judicial wrath. This means that His wrath was warded off by the sacrificial covering of their sin. The atonement should not be represented as the moving cause of the love of God, for it was already an expression of His love. It is often represented as if, on the satisfaction theory, God could not love the sinner until His just demands were met. But then the fact is overlooked that Christ is already the gift of God's love, John 3:16. At the same time it is perfectly true that the atonement did remove obstacles to the

manifestation of God's redeeming love in the pardoning of sinners and in their sanctification, by satisfying the justice of God and the demands of the law, both in its federal and penal aspects.

2. ITS EFFECT WITH RESPECT TO CHRIST. The atonement secured a manifold reward for Christ as Mediator. He was constituted the life-giving Spirit, the inexhaustible source of all the blessings of salvation for sinners. He received:

a. All that belonged to His glorification, including His present Messianic glory. Hence He prayed, when in His high priestly prayer He by anticipation already thought of His work as completed, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was," John 17:5.

b. The fulness of those gifts and graces which He imparts to His people. Thus we read in Ps. 68:18: "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea for the rebellious also, that the Lord might dwell among them." Paul applies this to Christ in Eph. 4:8.

c. The gift of the Holy Spirit for the formation of His mystical body and the subjective application of the fruits of His atoning work. This is evident from the words of Peter on the day of Pentecost: "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear," Acts 2:33.

d. The ends of the earth for His possession and the world for His dominion. This was one of the promises made unto Him: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession," Ps. 2:8. That this promise was fulfilled is quite evident from Heb. 2:6-9.

3. ITS EFFECT AS FAR AS THE SINNER IS CONCERNED.

a. The atonement not only made salvation possible for the sinner, but actually secured it. On this point Calvinists join issue with the Roman Catholics, the Lutherans, the Arminians, and all those who teach a universal atonement. These hold that the atonement of Christ merely made salvation possible, and not certain, for those for whom it was offered. But the Calvinist teaches that the atonement meritoriously secured the application of the work of redemption to those for whom it was intended and thus rendered their complete salvation certain.

b. It secured for those for whom it was made: (1) A proper judicial standing through justification. This includes the forgiveness of sin, the adoption of children, and the right to an eternal inheritance. (2) The mystical union of believers with Christ through regeneration and sanctification. This comprises the gradual mortification of the old man, and the gradual putting on of the new man created in Christ Jesus. (3) Their final bliss in communion with God through Jesus Christ, in subjective glorification, and in the enjoyment of eternal life in a new and perfect creation. All this clearly obviates the objection so often raised against the penal substitutionary doctrine of the atonement, namely, that it has no ethical bearings and offers no basis for the ethical life of the redeemed. It may even be said that it is the only doctrine of the atonement that offers a secure basis for a real ethical life, a life that is rooted in the heart through the operation of the Holy Spirit. Justification leads right on to sanctification.

B. THE EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT.

GLOSS Particular atonement: the Reformed teaching that Christ died with the effective purpose of saving the elect.

1. THE EXACT POINT AT ISSUE. The question with which we are concerned at this point is not (a) whether the satisfaction rendered by Christ

was in itself sufficient for the salvation of all men, since this is admitted by all; (b) whether the saving benefits are actually applied to every man, for the great majority of those who teach a universal atonement do not believe that all are actually saved; (c) whether the bona fide offer of salvation is made to all that hear the gospel, on the condition of repentance and faith, since the Reformed Churches do not call this in question; nor (d) whether any of the fruits of the death of Christ accrue to the benefit of the non-elect in virtue of their close association with the people of God, since this is explicitly taught by many Reformed scholars. On the other hand, the question does relate to the design of the atonement. Did the Father in sending Christ, and did Christ in coming into the world, to make atonement for sin, do this with the design or for the purpose of saving only the elect or all men? That is the question, and that only is the question.

2. STATEMENT OF THE REFORMED POSITION. The Reformed position is that Christ died for the purpose of actually and certainly saving the elect, and the elect only. This is equivalent to saying that He died for the purpose of saving only those to whom He actually applies the benefits of His redemptive work. Various attempts have been made in circles that claimed to be Reformed to modify this position. The Dutch Arminians maintained that Christ died for the purpose of making salvation possible for all men without exception, though they will not all be saved. Salvation is offered to them on lower terms than it was to Adam, namely on condition of faith and evangelical obedience, a condition which they can meet in virtue of God's gift of common or sufficient grace to all men. The Calvinistic Universalists sought to mediate between the Reformed position and that of the Arminians. They distinguished a twofold decree of God: (a) A decree to send Christ into the world to save all men by His atoning death on condition of faith in Him. However, because God saw that this purpose would fail, since no one would accept Christ by faith, He followed up the first by a second decree. (b) A decree to give a certain elect number special grace, in order to engender faith in their hearts and to secure their salvation. This dubious and very unsatisfactory view was held by the

school of Saumur (Cameron, Amyraldus, and Testardus), and also by such English scholars as Wardlaw, John Brown, and James Richards. Some New England theologians, such as Emmons, Taylor, Park, and Beman held a somewhat similar view. The Marrow-men of Scotland were perfectly orthodox in maintaining that Christ died for the purpose of saving only the elect, though some of them used expressions which also pointed to a more general reference of the atonement. They said that Christ did not die for all men, but that He is dead, that is, available, for all. God's giving love, which is universal, led Him to make a deed of gift and grant to all men; and this is the foundation for the universal offer of salvation. His electing love, however, which is special, results in the salvation of the elect only. The most important of the Marrowmen were Hog, Boston, and the two Erskines.

3. PROOF FOR THE DOCTRINE OF A LIMITED ATONEMENT. The following proofs may be given for the doctrine of particular atonement:

a. It may be laid down, first of all, as a general principle, that the designs of God are always surely efficacious and cannot be frustrated by the actions of man. This applies also to the purpose of saving men through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. If it had been His intention to save all men, this purpose could not have been frustrated by the unbelief of man. It is admitted on all hands that only a limited number is saved. Consequently, they are the only ones whom God has determined to save.

b. Scripture repeatedly qualifies those for whom Christ laid down His life in such a way as to point to a very definite limitation. Those for whom He suffered and died are variously called "His sheep," John 10:11,15, "His Church," Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25-27, "His people," Matt. 1:21, and "the elect," Rom. 8:32-35.

c. The sacrificial work of Christ and His intercessory work are simply two different aspects of His atoning work, and therefore the scope of the one can be no wider than that of the other. Now Christ very definitely limits His intercessory work, when He says: "I pray not for the world, but for those

whom thou hast given me.” John 17:9. Why should He limit His intercessory prayer, if He had actually paid the price for all?

d. It should also be noted that the doctrine that Christ died for the purpose of saving all men, logically leads to absolute universalism, that is, to the doctrine that all men are actually saved. It is impossible that they for whom Christ paid the price, whose guilt He removed, should be lost on account of that guilt. The Arminians cannot stop at their half-way station, but must go all the way.

e. If it be said, as some do say, that the atonement was universal, but that the application of it is particular; that He made salvation possible for all, but actually saves only a limited number, — it should be pointed out that there is an inseparable connection between the purchase and the actual bestowal of salvation. The Bible clearly teaches that the design and effect of the atoning work of Christ is not merely to make salvation possible, but to reconcile God and man, and to put men in actual possession of eternal salvation, a salvation which many fail to obtain, Matt. 18:11; Rom. 5:10; II Cor. 5:21; Gal. 1:4; 3:13; Eph. 1:7.

f. And if the assertion be made that the design of God and of Christ was evidently conditional, contingent on the faith and obedience of man, attention should be called to the fact that the Bible clearly teaches that Christ by His death purchased faith, repentance, and all the other effects of the work of the Holy Spirit, for His people. Consequently these are no conditions of which the fulfilment is simply dependent on the will of man. The atonement also secures the fulfilment of the conditions that must be met, in order to obtain salvation, Rom. 2:4; Gal. 3:13,14; Eph. 1:3,4; 2:8; Phil. 1:29; II Tim. 3:5,6.

4. OBJECTIONS TO THE DOCTRINE OF A LIMITED ATONEMENT. These may be classified as follows:

a. There are passages which teach that Christ died for the world, John 1:29; 3:16; 6:33,51; Rom. 11:12,15; II Cor. 5:19; I John 2:2. The objection based on

these passages proceeds on the unwarranted assumption that the word “world” as used in them means “all the individuals that constitute the human race.” If this were not so, the objection based on them would have no point. But it is perfectly evident from Scripture that the term “world” has a variety of meanings, as a mere reading of the following passages will prove conclusively, Luke 2:1; John 1:10; Acts 11:28; 19:27; 24:5; Rom. 1:8; Col. 1:6. It also appears that, when it is used of men, it does not always include all men, John 7:4; 12:19; 14:22; 18:20; Rom. 11:12,15; in some of these passages it cannot possibly denote all men. If it had that meaning in John 6:33,51, it would follow that Christ actually gives life to all men, that is, saves them all. This is more than the opponents themselves believe. In Rom. 11:12, 15 the word “world” cannot be all-inclusive, since the context clearly excludes Israel; and because on that supposition these passages too would prove more than is intended, namely, that the fruits of the atoning work of Christ are actually applied to all. We do find in these passages, however, an indication of the fact that the word “world” is sometimes used to indicate that the Old Testament particularism belongs to the past, and made way for New Testament universalism. The blessings of the gospel were extended to all nations, Matt. 24:14; Mark 16:16; Rom. 1:5; 10:18. This is probably the key to the interpretation of the word “world” in such passages as John 1:29; 6:33,51; II Cor. 5:19; I John 2:2. Dr. Shedd assumes that the word means “all nations” in such passages as Matt. 26:13; John 3:16; I Cor. 1:21; II Cor. 5:19; and I John 2:2; but holds that in other passages it denotes the world of believers, or the Church, John 6:33,51; Rom. 4:13; 11:12,15. Kuyper and Van Andel also assume that this is the meaning of the word in some passages.

b. Closely related to the passages to which we referred in the preceding, are those in which it is said that Christ died for all men, Rom. 5:18; I Cor. 15:22; II Cor. 5:14; I Tim. 2:4,6; Tit. 2:11; Heb. 2:9; II Pet. 3:9. Naturally, each of these passages must be considered in the connection in which it is found. For instance, the context clearly shows that the “all” or “all men” of Rom. 5:18, and I Cor. 15:22 includes only those who are in Christ, as contrasted with all who

are in Adam. If the word “all” in these passages is not interpreted in a limited sense, they would teach, not merely that Christ made salvation possible for all men, but that He actually saves all without exception. Thus the Arminian would again be forced into the camp of the absolute Universalist, where he does not want to be. A similar limitation must be applied in the interpretation of II Cor. 5:14, and Heb. 2:9, cf. verse 10. Otherwise they would prove too much, and therefore prove nothing. In all these passages the “all” are simply all those who are in Christ. In the case of Tit. 2:11, which speaks of the appearance of the grace of God, “bringing salvation to all men,” the context clearly shows that “all men” really means all classes of men. If the “all” is not restricted, this passage too would teach universal salvation. The passages in I Tim. 2:4-6, Heb. 2:9; II Pet. 3:9 refer to the revealed will of God that both Jews and Gentiles should be saved, but imply nothing as to the universal intent of the atonement. Even Moses Stuart, who believes in universal atonement, admits that in these cases the word “all” cannot be taken in a universal sense.

c. A third class of passages which seem to militate against the idea of a limited atonement consists of those which are said to imply the possibility that those for whom Christ died fail to obtain salvation. Rom. 14:15 and the parallel passage in I Cor. 8:11 may be mentioned first of all. Some commentators are of the opinion that these passages do not refer to eternal destruction, but it is more likely that they do. The apostle simply wants to bring the uncharitable conduct of some of the stronger brethren in the Church into strong relief. They were likely to offend the weaker brethren, to cause them to stumble, to override their conscience, and thus to enter upon the downward path, the natural result of which, if continued, would be destruction. While Christ paid the price of His life to save such persons, they by their conduct tended to destroy them. That this destruction will not actually follow, is evident from Rom. 14:4; by the grace of God they will be upheld. We have here then, as Dr. Shedd expresses it, “a supposition, for the sake of argument, of something that does not and cannot happen,” just as in I Cor. 13:1-3; Gal. 1:8. Another, somewhat similar, passage is found in II Pet. 2:1, with which Heb. 10:29 may

also be classed. The most plausible explanation of these passages is that given by Smeaton, as the interpretation of Piscator and of the Dutch annotations, namely, “that these false teachers are described according to their own profession and the judgment of charity. They gave themselves out as redeemed men, and were so accounted in the judgment of the Church while they abode in her communion.”[The Doctrine of the Atonement as Taught by the Apostles, p. 447.]

d. Finally, there is an objection derived from the bona fide offer of salvation. We believe that God “unfeignedly,” that is, sincerely or in good faith, calls all those who are living under the gospel to believe, and offers them salvation in the way of faith and repentance. Now the Arminians maintain that such an offer of salvation cannot be made by those who believe that Christ died only for the elect. This objection was already raised at the time of the Synod of Dort, but its validity was not granted. The following remarks may be made in reply: (a) The offer of salvation in the way of faith and repentance does not pretend to be a revelation of the secret counsel of God, more specifically, of His design in giving Christ as an atonement for sin. It is simply the promise of salvation to all those who accept Christ by faith. (2) This offer, in so far as it is universal, is always conditioned by faith and conversion. Moreover, it is contingent on a faith and repentance such as can only be wrought in the heart of man by the operation of the Holy Spirit. (3) The universal offer of salvation does not consist in the declaration that Christ made atonement for every man that hears the gospel, and that God really intends to save each one. It consists in (a) an exposition of the atoning work of Christ as in itself sufficient for the redemption of all men; (b) a description of the real nature of the repentance and faith that are required in coming to Christ; and (c) a declaration that each one who comes to Christ with true repentance and faith will obtain the blessings of salvation. (4) It is not the duty of the preacher to harmonize the secret counsel of God respecting the redemption of sinners with His declarative will as expressed in the universal offer of salvation. He is simply an official ambassador, whose duty it is to carry out the will of the Lord in

preaching the gospel to all men indiscriminately. (5) Dr. Shedd says: “The universal offer of the benefits of Christ’s atonement springs out of God’s will of complacency, Ezek. 33:11.... God may properly call upon the non-elect to do a thing that God delights in, simply because He does delight in it. The divine desire is not altered by the divine decree of preterition.”[Dogm. Theol. II, p. 484.] He also quotes a very similar statement from Turretin. (6) The universal offer of salvation serves the purpose of disclosing the aversion and obstinacy of man in his opposition to the gospel, and of removing every vestige of excuse. If it were not made, sinners might say that they would gladly have accepted the gift of God, if it only had been offered to them.

5. THE WIDER BEARING OF THE ATONEMENT. The question may be raised, whether the atonement wrought by Christ for the salvation of the elect, and of the elect only, has any wider bearing. The question is often discussed in Scottish theology, whether Christ did not die, in some other than a saving sense, also for the non-elect. It was discussed by several of the older theologians, such as Rutherford, Brown, Durham, and Dickson, but was answered by them in the negative. “They held, indeed,” says Walker, “the intrinsic sufficiency of Christ’s death to save the world, or worlds; but that was altogether irrespective of Christ’s purpose, or Christ’s accomplishment. The phrase that Christ died sufficiently for all was not approved, because the ‘for’ seemed to imply some reality of actual substitution.”[Scottish Theology and Theologians, p. 80.] Durham denied that any mercy bestowed upon the reprobate, and enjoyed by them, could be said to be the proper fruit of, or the purchase of, Christ’s death; but at the same time maintained that certain consequences of Christ’s death of an advantageous kind must reach wicked men, though it is doubtful whether these can be regarded as a blessing for them. This was also the position taken by Rutherford and Gillespie. The Marrow-men of Scotland, while holding that Christ died for the purpose of saving only the elect, concluded from the universal offer of salvation that the work of Christ also had a wider bearing, and that, to use their own words, “God the Father, moved by nothing but His free love to mankind lost, hath

made a deed of gift and grant unto all men of His Son Jesus Christ.” According to them all sinners are legatees under Christ’s testament, not indeed in the essence but in the administration of the covenant of grace, but the testament becomes effectual only in the case of the elect. Their position was condemned by the Church of Scotland. Several Reformed theologians hold that, though Christ suffered and died only for the purpose of saving the elect, many benefits of the cross of Christ do actually — and that also according to the plan of God — accrue to the benefit of those who do not accept Christ by faith. They believe that the blessings of common grace also result from the atoning work of Christ.[Cf. Witsius, *De Verbonden* II, 9.4; Turretin, *Loc. XIV, Q. 14, Sec. 11*; Cunningham, *Hist. Theol. II*, p. 332; Hodge, *The Atonement*, 358 and elsewhere; Grosheide in the *Evangelical Quarterly*, April, 1940, p. 127. Cf. also Strong, *Syst. Theol.*, p. 772.]

That the atoning work of Christ also had significance for the angelic world would seem to follow from Eph. 1:10, and Col. 1:20. Things on earth and things in heaven are summed up in Christ as a Head (*anakephalaïosasthai*), Eph. 1:10, and are reconciled to God through the blood of the cross, Col. 1:20. Kuyper holds that the angelic world, which lost its head when Satan fell away, is reorganized under Christ as Head. This would reconcile or bring together the angelic world and the world of humanity under a single Head. Naturally, Christ is not the Head of the angels in the organic sense in which He is the Head of the Church. Finally, the atoning work of Christ will also result in a new heaven and a new earth in which dwelleth righteousness, a fit dwellingplace for the new and glorified humanity, and in the glorious liberty in which the lower creation will also share, Rom. 8:19-22.

VII. The Intercessory Work of Christ

The risen Christ continues His priestly work in heaven. He represents His people before the Father and applies the benefits of His accomplished sacrifice.

The priestly work of Christ is not limited to the sacrificial offering of Himself on the cross. The representation is sometimes given that, while Christ was a Priest on earth, He is a King in heaven. This creates the impression that His priestly work is finished, which is by no means correct. Christ is not only an earthly but also, and especially, a heavenly High Priest. He is even while seated at the right hand of God in heavenly majesty, “a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.” Heb. 8:2. He only began His priestly work on earth, and is completing it in heaven. In the strict sense of the word He is not reckoned among the earthly priests, who were but shadows of a coming reality, Heb. 8:4. He is the true, that is, the real Priest, serving at the real sanctuary, of which the tabernacle of Israel was but an imperfect shadow. At the same time He is now the Priest upon the throne, our Intercessor with the Father.

A. SCRIPTURAL PROOF FOR THE INTERCESSORY WORK OF CHRIST.

GLOSS Intercession: Christ’s continuing priestly representation and advocacy for those whom He has redeemed.

1. THE INTERCESSORY WORK OF CHRIST SYMBOLIZED. While the sacrificial work of Christ was symbolized primarily by the priestly functions at the brazen altar and the sacrifices that were brought upon it, His intercessory work was prefigured by the daily burning of incense on the golden altar in the Holy Place. The constantly rising cloud of incense was not only a symbol of the prayers of Israel, but also a type of the high priestly prayer of our great High Priest. This symbolic action of burning incense was not dissociated from, but most closely connected with, the bringing of the sacrifices at the brazen altar. It was connected with the application of the blood of the more important sinofferings, which was applied to the horns of the golden altar, also called the

altar of incense, was sprinkled towards the veil, and on the great Day of Atonement was even brought within the Holy of Holies and sprinkled upon the mercy-seat. This manipulation of the blood symbolized the presentation of the sacrifice to God, who dwelt between the cherubim. The Holy of Holies was clearly a symbol and type of the city four-square, the heavenly Jerusalem. There is still another connection between the sacrificial work at the brazen altar and the symbolical intercession at the golden altar. The fact that the incense might be burned only on living coals taken from the altar of burnt-offering was an indication of the fact that the intercession was based on the sacrifice and would be effective in no other way. This clearly indicates that the intercessory work of Christ in heaven is based on His accomplished sacrificial work, and is acceptable only on that basis.

2. NEW TESTAMENT INDICATIONS OF CHRIST'S INTERCESSORY WORK. The term *parakletos* is applied to Christ. The word is found only in John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 26:7; I John 2:1. It is rendered "Comforter" wherever it is found in the Gospel of John, but "Advocate" in the single passage in which it is found in the First Epistle of John. The form is a passive, and can therefore, says Westcott, "properly mean only 'one called to the side of another,' and that with the secondary notion of counseling or aiding him." [Commentary on the Gospel of John, Additional Note after Chapter XVI.] He points out that the word has that meaning in classical Greek, in Philo, and also in the writings of the Rabbis. Many of the Greek Fathers, however, gave the word an active sense, rendered it "Comforter," and thus gave undue prominence to what is but a secondary application of the term, though they felt that this meaning would not fit in I John 2:1. The word, then, denotes one who is called in for aid, an advocate, one who pleads the cause of another and also gives him wise counsel. Naturally, the work of such an advocate may bring comfort, and therefore he can also in a secondary sense be called a comforter. Christ is explicitly called our Advocate only in I John 2:1, but by implication also in John 14:16. The promise, "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may be with you forever," clearly implied that

Christ was also a parakletos. The Gospel of John regularly applies the term to the Holy Spirit. There are therefore two Advocates, Christ and the Holy Spirit. Their work is partly identical and partly different. When Christ was on earth, He was the Advocate of the disciples, pleading their cause against the world and serving them with wise counsel, and the Holy Spirit is now continuing that work in the Church. In so far the work is identical, but there is also a difference. Christ as our Advocate pleads the believer's cause with the Father against Satan, the accuser (Zech. 3:1; Heb. 7:25; I John 2:1; Rev. 12:10), while the Holy Spirit not only pleads the cause of believers against the world (John 16:8), but also pleads the cause of Christ with believers and serves them with wise counsel, (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:14). Briefly, we can also say that Christ pleads our cause with God, while the Holy Spirit pleads God's cause with us. Other New Testament passages which speak of the intercessory work of Christ are found in Rom. 8:24; Heb. 7:25; 9:24.

B. THE NATURE OF CHRIST'S INTERCESSORY WORK.

It is evident that this work of Christ may not be dissociated from His atoning sacrifice, which forms its necessary basis. It is but the continuation of the priestly work of Christ, carrying it to completion. Compared with the sacrificial work of Christ His ministry of intercession receives but little attention. Even in evangelical circles the impression is often given, though perhaps without intending it, that the work accomplished by the Saviour on earth was far more important than the services which He now renders in heaven. It seems to be little understood that in the Old Testament the daily ministrations at the temple culminated in the burning of incense, which symbolized the ministry of intercession; and that the annual ritual on the great Day of Atonement reached its highest point, when the high priest passed beyond the veil with the atoning blood. Neither can it be said that the ministry of intercession is sufficiently understood. This may be the cause, but may also be the result, of the widespread failure of Christians to rivet the attention on it. The prevailing idea is that the intercession of Christ consists exclusively in the

prayers which He offers for His people. Now it cannot be denied that these form an important part of the intercessory work of Christ, but they are not the whole of it. The fundamental point to remember is that the ministry of intercession should not be dissociated from the atonement, since they are but two aspects of the same redemptive work of Christ, and the two may be said to merge into one. Martin finds that the two constantly appear in juxtaposition and are so closely related in Scripture, that he feels justified in making the following statement: “The essence of the Intercession is Atonement; and the Atonement is essentially an Intercession. Or, perhaps, to put the paradox more mildly: The Atonement is real, — real sacrifice and offering, and not mere passive endurance, — because it is in its very nature an active and infallible intercession; while, on the other hand, the Intercession is real intercession, — judicial, representative, and priestly intercession, and not a mere exercise of influence, — because it is essentially an Atonement or substitutionary oblation, once perfected on Calvary, now perpetually presented and undergoing perpetual acceptance in heaven.”[The Atonement, p. 115.] Analyzing it, we find the following elements in the intercession of Christ:

1. Just as the high priest on the great Day of Atonement entered the Holy of Holies with the completed sacrifice, to present it to God, so Christ entered the heavenly Holy Place with His completed, perfect, and all-sufficient sacrifice, and offered it to the Father. And just as the high priest, on entering the Holy Place, came into the presence of God, symbolically bearing the tribes of Israel on His breast, so Christ appeared before God as the representative of His people, and thus reinstated humanity in the presence of God. It is to this fact that the writer of Hebrews refers when he says: “For Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, like in pattern to the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us,” Heb. 9:24. Reformed theologians often directed attention to it that the perpetual presence of the completed sacrifice of Christ before God contains in itself an element of intercession as a constant reminder of the perfect atonement of Jesus Christ. It is something like the blood of the passover, of which the Lord said: “And the blood shall be to

you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you.” Ex. 12:13.

2. There is also a judicial element in the intercession, just as there is in the atonement. Through the atonement Christ met all the just demands of the law, so that no legal charges can justly be brought against those for whom He paid the price. However, Satan the accuser is ever bent on bringing charges against the elect; but Christ meets them all by pointing to His completed work. He is the Paraklete, the Advocate, for His people, answering all the charges that are brought against them. We are reminded of this not only by the name “Paraklete,” but also by the words of Paul in Rom. 8:33,34: “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Jesus Christ that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” Here the judicial element is clearly present. Cf. also Zech. 3:1,2.

3. Not only does the intercessory work of Christ bear on our judicial state; it also relates to our moral condition, our gradual sanctification. When we address the Father in His name, He sanctifies our prayers. They need this, because they are often so imperfect, trivial, superficial, and even insincere, while they are addressed to One who is perfect in holiness and majesty. And besides rendering our prayers acceptable, He also sanctifies our services in the Kingdom of God. This is also necessary, because we are often conscious of the fact that they do not spring from the purest motives; and that even when they do, they are far from that perfection that would make them, in themselves, acceptable to a holy God. The blight of sin rests upon them all. Therefore Peter says: “Unto whom coming, a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious, ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” Christ’s ministry of intercession is also a ministry of loving care for His people. He helps them in their difficulties, their trials, and their temptations. “For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the

feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin: for in that He himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted.” Heb. 4:15; Heb. 2:18.

4. And in and through it all there is, finally, also the element of prayer for the people of God. If the intercession is of a piece with the atoning work of Christ, it follows that the prayer of intercession must have reference to the things pertaining to God (Heb. 5:1), to the completion of the work of redemption. That this element is included, is quite evident from the intercessory prayer in John 17, where Christ explicitly says that He prays for the apostles and for those who through their word will believe in Him. It is a consoling thought that Christ is praying for us, even when we are negligent in our prayer life; that He is presenting to the Father those spiritual needs which were not present to our minds and which we often neglect to include in our prayers; and that He prays for our protection against the dangers of which we are not even conscious, and against the enemies which threaten us, though we do not notice it. He is praying that our faith may not cease, and that we may come out victoriously in the end.

C. THE PERSONS FOR WHOM AND THE THINGS FOR WHICH HE INTERCEDES.

1. THE PERSONS FOR WHOM HE INTERCEDES. The intercessory work is, as has been said, simply the complement of His redemptive priestly work, and is therefore equal to it in extent. Christ intercedes for all those for whom He has made atonement, and for those only. This may be inferred from the limited character of the atonement, and also from such passages as Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; 9:24, in every one of which the word “us” refers to believers. Moreover, in the high priestly prayer, recorded in John 17, Jesus tells us that He prays for His immediate disciples and “for them also that believe on me through their word,” John 17:9, 20. In the 9th verse He makes a very explicit statement respecting the limitation of His high priestly prayer: “I pray for them: I pray

not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me.” And from the 20th verse we can learn that He does not intercede for present believers only, but for all the elect, whether they are already believers, or will believe some time in the future. The intercessor is mindful of each one of those that are given unto Him, Luke 21:32; Rev. 3:5. Lutherans distinguish between a general intercession of Christ for all men, and a special intercession for the elect only. For proof they appeal to Luke 23:34, which contains Christ’s prayer for His enemies, but that prayer need not be considered as a part of the official intercessory work of Christ. Dabney believes that it was, and that the objects of this prayer were later on converted. But it is also possible that this prayer was simply a prayer such as Christ taught all his followers to pray for their enemies, a prayer to ward off an immediate and terrible punishment for the enormous crime committed. Cf. Matt. 5:44.

2. THE THINGS FOR WHICH CHRIST INTERCEDES. Christ has a great deal to pray for in His intercessory prayer. We can only give a brief indication of some of the things for which He prays. He prays that the elect who have not yet come to Him may be brought into a state of grace; that those who have already come may receive pardon for their daily sins, that is, may experience the continued application to them of the fruits of justification; that believers may be kept from the accusations and temptations of Satan; that the saints may be progressively sanctified, John 17:17; that their intercourse with heaven may be kept up, Heb. 4:14, 16; 10:21, 22; that the services of the people of God may be accepted, I Pet. 2:5; and that they may at last enter upon their perfect inheritance in heaven, John 17:24.

D. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF HIS INTERCESSION.

There are especially three characteristics of the intercessory work of Christ, to which attention should be directed:

1. THE CONSTANCY OF HIS INTERCESSION. We need not only a Saviour who has completed an objective work for us in the past, but also one who is

daily engaged in securing for His own the subjective application of the fruits of the accomplished sacrifice, Tens of thousands of people call for His attention at once, and a moment's intermission would prove fatal to their interests. Therefore He is always on the alert. He is alive to all their wants, and none of their prayers escape Him.

2. THE AUTHORITATIVE CHARACTER OF HIS INTERCESSION. It is not altogether correct to represent Him as a suppliant at the throne of God, begging favors of His Father for His people. His prayer is not the petition of the creature to the Creator, but the request of the Son to the Father. "The consciousness of His equal dignity, of His potent and prevailing intercession, speaks out in this, that as often as He asks, or declares that He will ask, anything of the Father, it is always *eroto*, *eroteso*, an asking, that is, as upon equal terms (John 14:16; 16:26; 17:9,15,20), never *aiteo* or *aiteso*." [Trench, New Testament Synonyms, p. 136.] Christ stands before the Father as an authorized intercessor, and as one who can present legal claims. He can say: "Father, I desire that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am," John 17:24.

3. THE EFFICACY OF HIS INTERCESSION. The intercessory prayer of Christ is a prayer that never fails. At the grave of Lazarus the Lord expressed the assurance that the Father always hears Him, John 11:42. His intercessory prayers for His people are based on His atoning work; He has merited all that He asks, and therein lies the assurance that those prayers are effective. They will accomplish all that He desires. The people of God may derive comfort from the fact that they have such a prevailing intercessor with the Father.

VIII. The Kingly Office

Christ rules His Church by grace and governs all things for its good. His mediatorial kingship secures the gathering, protection, and final perfection of His people.

As the Second Person in the Holy Trinity, the eternal Son, Christ naturally shares the dominion of God over all His creatures. His throne is established in the heavens and His Kingdom ruleth over all, Ps. 103:19. This kingship differs from the mediatorial kingship of Christ, which is a conferred and economical kingship, exercised by Christ, not merely in His divine nature, but as Theanthropos (the God-man). The latter is not a kingship that was Christ's by original right, but one with which He is invested. It does not pertain to a new realm, one that was not already under His control as Son of God, for such a realm can nowhere be found. It is rather, to speak in the words of Dick, His original kingship, "invested with a new form, wearing a new aspect, administered for a new end." In general we may define the mediatorial kingship of Christ as His official power to rule all things in heaven and on earth, for the glory of God, and for the execution of God's purpose of salvation. We must distinguish, however, between a *regnum gratiae* and a *regnum potentiae*.

A. THE SPIRITUAL KINGSHIP OF CHRIST.

GLOSS *Regnum gratiae*: the kingdom of grace: Christ's spiritual rule over His redeemed people, the Church.

1. THE NATURE OF THIS KINGSHIP. The spiritual kingship of Christ is His royal rule over the *regnum gratiae*, that is over His people or the Church. It is a spiritual kingship, because it relates to a spiritual realm. It is the mediatorial rule as it is established in the hearts and lives of believers. Moreover, it is spiritual, because it bears directly and immediately on a spiritual end, the salvation of His people. And, finally, it is spiritual, because it is administered, not by force or external means, but by the Word and the Spirit, which is the Spirit of truth and wisdom, of justice and holiness, of grace and mercy. This kingship reveals itself in the gathering of the Church, and in its government, protection, and perfection. The Bible speaks of it in many

places, such as, Ps. 2:6; 45:6,7 (cf. Heb. 1:8,9); 132:11; Isa. 9:6,7; Jer. 23:5,6; Mic. 5:2; Zech. 6:13; Luke 1:33; 19:27,38; 22:29; John 18:36,37; Acts 2:30-36, and other places. The spiritual nature of this kingship is indicated, among others, by the fact that Christ is repeatedly called the Head of the Church, Eph. 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Col. 1:18; 2:19. This term, as applied to Christ, is in some cases practically equivalent to “King” (Head in a figurative sense, one clothed with authority), as in I Cor. 11:3; Eph. 1:22; 5:23; in other cases, however, it is used in a literal and organic sense, Eph. 4:15; Col. 1:18; 2:19, and in part also Eph. 1:22. The word is never used (except it be in I Cor. 11:3) without the implication of this organic conception. The two ideas are most intimately connected. It is just because Christ is the Head of the Church that He can rule it as King in an organic and spiritual way. The relation between the two may be indicated as follows: (1) The headship of Christ points to the mystical union between Christ and His body, the Church, and therefore belongs to the sphere of being. His kingship, however, implies that He is clothed with authority, and belongs to the judicial sphere. (2) The headship of Christ is subservient to His kingship. The Spirit which Christ, as the Head of the Church, imparts to it, is also the means by which He exercises His royal power in and over the Church. Present day Premillenarians strongly insist that Christ is the Head of the Church, but as a rule deny that He is its King. This is tantamount to saying that He is not the authoritative Ruler of the Church, and that the officers of the Church do not represent Him in the government of the Church. They not only refuse to admit that He is the King of the Church, but deny His present kingship altogether, except, perhaps, as a kingship *de jure*, a kingship which is His by right but has not yet become effective. At the same time their practice is better than their theory, for in practical life they do, rather inconsistently, recognize the authority of Jesus Christ.

2. THE KINGDOM OVER WHICH IT EXTENDS. This kingdom has the following characteristics:

a. It is grounded in the work of redemption. The *regnum gratiae* did not originate in the creative work of God but, as the name itself indicates, in His redeeming grace. No one is a citizen of this kingdom in virtue of his humanity. Only the redeemed have that honour and privilege. Christ paid the ransom for those that are His, and by His Spirit applies to them the merits of His perfect sacrifice. Consequently, they now belong to Him and recognize Him as their Lord and King.

b. It is a spiritual Kingdom. In the Old Testament dispensation this kingdom was adumbrated in the theocratic kingdom of Israel. Even in the old dispensation the reality of this kingdom was found only in the inner life of believers. The national kingdom of Israel, in which God was King, Lawgiver, and Judge, and the earthly king was only the vicegerent of Jehovah, appointed to represent the King, to carry out His will, and to execute His judgments, was only a symbol, and a shadow and type of that glorious reality, especially as it was destined to appear in the days of the New Testament. With the coming of the new dispensation all the Old Testament shadows passed away, and among them also the theocratic kingdom. Out of the womb of Israel the spiritual reality of the kingdom came forth and assumed an existence independent of the Old Testament theocracy. Hence the spiritual character of the kingdom stands forth far more clearly in the New Testament than it does in the Old. The *regnum gratiae* of Christ is identical with what the New Testament calls the kingdom of God or of heaven. Christ is its mediatorial King. Premillenarians mistakenly teach that the terms “kingdom of God” and “kingdom of heaven,” as they are used in the Gospels, refer to two different realities, namely, to the universal kingdom of God and the future mediatorial kingdom of Christ. It is perfectly evident, as some of their own leaders feel constrained to admit, that the two terms are used interchangeably in the Gospels. This appears from the fact that, while Matthew and Luke often report the same statements of Jesus, the former represents Him as using the term “kingdom of heaven,” and the latter substitutes for it the term “kingdom of God,” compare Matt. 13 with Mark 4; Luke 8:1-10, and many other passages. The spiritual nature of the

kingdom is brought out in several ways. Negatively, it is clearly indicated that the kingdom is not an external and natural kingdom of the Jews, Matt. 8:11,12; 21:43; Luke 17:21; John 18:36. Positively, we are taught that it can be entered only by regeneration, John 3:3,5; that it is like a seed cast into the earth, Mark 4:26-29, like a mustard seed, Mark 4:30, and like a leaven, Matt. 13:33. It is in the hearts of people, Luke 17:21, “is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,” Rom. 14:17, and is not of this world, but a kingdom of the truth, John 18:36,37. The citizens of the kingdom are described as the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, the peacemakers, the pure in heart, and those that hunger and thirst for righteousness. The spiritual nature of the Kingdom should be stressed over against all those who deny the present reality of the mediatorial kingdom of God and hold that it will take the form of a re-established theocracy at the return of Jesus Christ.

In connection with the present day tendency to regard the kingdom of God simply as a new social condition, an ethical kingdom of ends, to be established by human endeavors, such as education, legal enactments, and social reforms, it is well to bear in mind that the term “kingdom of God” is not always used in the same sense. Fundamentally, the term denotes an abstract rather than a concrete idea, namely, the rule of God established and acknowledged in the hearts of sinners. If this is clearly understood, the futility of all human efforts and of all mere externals is at once apparent. By no mere human endeavors can the rule of God be established in the heart of a single man, nor can any man be brought to a recognition of that rule. In the measure in which God establishes His rule in the hearts of sinners, He creates for Himself a realm in which He rules and in which He dispenses the greatest privileges and the choicest blessings. And, again, in the proportion in which man responds to the rule of God and obeys the laws of the kingdom, a new condition of things will naturally result. In fact, if all those who are now citizens of the Kingdom would actually obey its laws in every domain of life, the world would be so different that it would hardly be recognized. In view of all that has been said, it causes no surprise that the term “kingdom of God” is used in various senses in

Scripture, as, for instance, to denote the kingship of God or of the Messiah, Matt. 6:10; the realm over which this rule extends and the condition of things to which it gives rise, Matt. 7:21; 19:23,24; 8:12; the totality of the blessings and privileges that flow from the reign of God or of the Messiah, Matt. 13:44, 45; and the condition of things that marks the triumphant culmination of the reign of God in Christ, Matt. 22:2-14; Luke 14:16-24; 13:29.

c. It is a kingdom that is both present and future. It is on the one hand a present, ever developing, spiritual reality in the hearts and lives of men, and as such exercises influence in a constantly widening sphere. Jesus and the apostles clearly refer to the kingdom as already present in their time, Matt. 12:28; Luke 17:21; Col. 1:13. This must be maintained over against the great majority of present day Premillenarians. On the other hand it is also a future hope, an eschatological reality; in fact, the eschatological aspect of the kingdom is the more prominent of the two, Matt. 7:21,22; 19:23; 22:2-14; 25:1-13,34; Luke 22:29, 30; I Cor. 6:9; 15:50; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5; I Thess. 2:12; II Tim. 4:18; Heb. 12:28; II Pet. 1:11. Essentially the future kingdom will consist, like that of the present, in the rule of God established and acknowledged in the hearts of men. But at the glorious coming of Jesus Christ this establishment and acknowledgment will be perfected, the hidden forces of the kingdom will stand revealed, and the spiritual rule of Christ will find its consummation in a visible and majestic reign. It is a mistake, however, to assume that the present kingdom will develop almost imperceptibly into the kingdom of the future. The Bible clearly teaches us that the future kingdom will be ushered in by great cataclysmic changes, Matt. 24:21-44; Luke 17:22-37; 21:5-33; I Thess. 5:2,3; II Pet. 3:10-12.

d. It is closely related to the Church, though not altogether identical with it. The citizenship of the kingdom is co-extensive with the membership in the invisible Church. Its field of operation, however, is wider than that of the Church, since it aims at the control of life in all its manifestations. The visible Church is the most important, and the only divinely instituted, external

organization of the kingdom. At the same time it is also the God-given means par excellence for the extension of the kingdom of God on earth. It is well to note that the term “kingdom of God” is sometimes employed in a sense which makes it practically equivalent to the visible Church, Matt. 8:12; 13:24-30, 47-50. While the Church and the kingdom must be distinguished, the distinction should not be sought along the lines indicated by Premillennialism, which regards the kingdom as essentially a kingdom of Israel, and the Church as the body of Christ, gathered in the present dispensation out of Jews and Gentiles. Israel was the Church of the Old Testament and in its spiritual essence constitutes a unity with the Church of the New Testament, Acts 7:38; Rom. 11:11-24; Gal. 3:7-9,29; Eph. 2:11-22.

3. THE DURATION OF THIS KINGSHIP.

a. Its beginning. Opinions differ on this point. Consistent Premillenarians deny the present mediatorial kingship of Christ, and believe that He will not be seated upon the throne as Mediator until He ushers in the millennium at the time of His second advent. And the Socinians claim that Christ was neither priest nor king before His ascension. The generally accepted position of the Church is that Christ received His appointment as mediatorial King in the depths of eternity, and that He began to function as such immediately after the fall, Prov. 8:23; Ps. 2:6. During the old dispensation He carried on His work as King partly through the judges of Israel, and partly through the typical kings. But though He was permitted to rule as Mediator even before His incarnation, He did not publicly and formally assume His throne and inaugurate His spiritual kingdom until the time of His ascension and elevation at the right hand of God, Acts 2:29-36; Phil. 2:5-11.

b. Its termination (?). The prevailing opinion is that the spiritual kingship of Christ over His Church will, as to its essential character, continue eternally, though it will undergo important changes in its mode of operation at the consummation of the world. The eternal duration of the spiritual kingship of Christ would seem to be explicitly taught in the following passages: Ps. 45:6

(comp. Heb. 1:8); 72:17; 89:36,37; Isa. 9:7; Dan. 2:44; II Sam. 7:13,16; Luke 1:33; II Pet. 1:11. The Heidelberg Catechism also speaks of Christ as “our eternal king.” Similarly the Belgic Confession in article XXVII. Moreover, the kingship and the headship of Christ are inextricably bound up together. The latter is subservient to the former, and is sometimes clearly represented as including the former, Eph. 1:21,22; 5:22-24. But, surely, Christ will never cease to be the Head of His Church, leaving the Church as a body without a Head. Finally, the fact that Christ is a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek, would also seem to argue in favor of the eternal duration of the spiritual kingship of Christ, since His mediatorial office is after all a unit. Dick and Kuyper, however, argue that this kingship of Christ will cease when He has accomplished the salvation of His people. The only passage of Scripture to which they appeal is I Cor. 15:24-28, but this passage evidently does not refer to Christ’s spiritual kingship, but to His kingship over the universe.

B. THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST OVER THE UNIVERSE.

GLOSS *Regnum potentiae*: the kingdom of power: Christ’s providential rule over all things for the good of His Church.

1. THE NATURE OF THIS KINGSHIP. By the *regnum potentiae* we mean the dominion of the God-man, Jesus Christ, over the universe, His providential and judicial administration of all things in the interest of the Church. As King of the universe the Mediator so guides the destinies of individuals, of social groups, and of nations, as to promote the growth, the gradual purification, and the final perfection of the people which He has redeemed by His blood. In that capacity He also protects His own against the dangers to which they are exposed in the world, and vindicates His righteousness by the subjection and destruction of all His enemies. In this kingship of Christ we find the initial restoration of the original kingship of man. The idea that Christ now rules the destinies of individuals and nations in the interest of His blood-bought

Church, is a far more comforting thought than the notion that He is now “a refugee on the throne of heaven.”

2. THE RELATION OF THE REGNUM POTENTIAE TO THE REGNUM GRATIAE. The Kingship of Christ over the universe is subservient to His spiritual kingship. It is incumbent on Christ, as the anointed King, to establish the spiritual kingdom of God, to govern it, and to protect it against all hostile forces. He must do this in a world which is under the power of sin and is bent on thwarting all spiritual endeavors. If that world were beyond His control, it might easily frustrate all His efforts. Therefore God invested Him with authority over it, so that He is able to control all powers and forces and movements in the world, and can thus secure a safe footing for His people in the world, and protect His own against all the powers of darkness. These cannot defeat His purposes, but are even constrained to serve them. Under the beneficent rule of Christ even the wrath of man is made to praise God.

3. THE DURATION OF THIS KINGSHIP. Christ was formally invested with this kingship over the universe when He was exalted at the right hand of God. It was a promised reward of His labors, Ps. 2:8,9; Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:20-22; Phil. 2:9-11. This investiture was part of the exaltation of the God-man. It did not give Him any power or authority which He did not already possess as the Son of God; neither did it increase His territory. But the God-man, the Mediator, was now made the possessor of this authority, and His human nature was made to share in the glory of this royal dominion. Moreover, the government of the world was now made subservient to the interests of the Church of Jesus Christ. And this kingship of Christ will last until the victory over the enemies is complete and even death has been abolished, I Cor. 15:24-28. At the consummation of all things the God-man will give up the authority conferred on Him for a special purpose, since it will no more be needed. He will return His commission to God, that God may be all in all. The purpose is accomplished; mankind is redeemed; and thereby the original kingship of man is restored.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY: In whom was Christ typified as prophet in the Old Testament? How were the true prophets distinguished from the false? How did prophets and priests differ as teachers? What was characteristic of the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek? Were the sacrifices of Cain and Abel peculiar? On what grounds do Jowett, Maurice, Young, and Bushnell deny the vicarious and typico-prophetical character of the Mosaic sacrifices? What is the difference between atonement, propitiation, reconciliation, and redemption? What accounts for the widespread aversion to the objective character of the atonement? What arguments are advanced to disprove the necessity of the atonement? Why is penal substitution practically impossible among men? Does the universal offer of salvation necessarily imply a universal atonement? What becomes of the doctrine of the atonement in modern liberal theology? What two parakletoi have we according to Scripture, and how does their work differ? What is the nature of the intercessory work of Christ? Are our intercessory prayers like those of Christ? Is Christ ever called “King of the Jews”? Do Premillenarians deny only the present spiritual kingship of Christ or also His Kingship over the universe?