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### The Atonement V—The Atonement of Broader Scope Than Making Satisfaction for Adam's Sin

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## The Atonement V— The Atonement of Broader Scope Than Making Satisfaction for Adam's Sin

*Sins of the individual.* The Atonement is of much broader scope than redemption from Adam's transgression for "original guilt." Not only was satisfaction to be made for the transgression of Adam, that the integrities of the moral government of the world might be preserved, but a redemption was also to be provided from the effects of the individual sins of man. Man, when he sins by breaking the laws of God, sins, of course, against divine law; commits a crime against the majesty of God, and thereby dishonors him. And man is just as helpless to make adequate satisfaction to God as Adam was for his sin in Eden; and is just as hopelessly in the grasp of inexorable law as Adam and his race were after the first transgression. For individual man from the beginning was as much in duty bound to keep the law of God as Adam was; and if now, in the present, and for the future he observes the law of God and remains righteous, he is doing no more than he ought to have done from the beginning; and doing his duty now and for the future cannot free him from the fact and the consequences of his past violations of God's law. The individual man, then, is in need of a satisfaction being made to the justice of God for his individual transgression of divine law.

*Distinction between Adam's ~~sin~~ transgression and individual sins.* The difference between the sin of Adam and the sin of the individual man is this:

First, Adam's sin, which the scriptures call the "Fall," was racial, in that it involved all the race of Adam in its consequences, bringing upon them both a spiritual and a physical death, the nature of which has already been explained. Man's individual sin is more limited in its consequences, though for a time his personal sin may involve the happiness of others in its consequences; yet ultimately they will be limited to

personal results, affecting the actual sinner's personal relationship to God, to righteousness, to truth, to progress, to sustained joy.

Second, Adam's sin was necessary to the creation of those conditions under which man could obtain the experiences of earth life necessary to the union of his spirit with earth elements; necessary to this progress as a divine intelligence; necessary to his knowledge of good and evil in actual conflict; joy and sorrow; pleasure and pain; life and death; in a word, necessary that man might become acquainted with these opposite existences (2 Ne. 2),<sup>1</sup> their nature, and their values; all which was essential to, and designed for man's progress, for his ultimate development in virtue and power and largeness and splendor of existence. But man's individual sins are not necessary to these general purposes of God. That is, the Fall of Adam was necessary to the accomplishment of the general purposes of God; but it was not necessary to those purposes that Cain should kill Abel, his brother; or "that every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart" should be "evil continually" (cf. Gen. 6:5).

The "Fall" of Adam, we say, was necessary to the attainment of these possibilities of progress for man, and hence the atonement made for Adam's sin is of universal effect and application without stipulations or conditions, or obedience, or any other act as a condition precedent to participation in the full benefits of release from the consequences of Adam's transgression. Hence it is written: "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men <to the> [unto] justification of life" (Rom. 5:18). Free redemption from the consequences of Adam's transgression, but not so with reference to man's individual sins. Salvation from the consequences of those sins is another story. All men sin: "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). "And so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). "There is none righteous, no, not one. . . . They are all gone out of the way; . . . there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10-12). But while all sin—except those who die in infancy or early childhood—it is not necessary to any of the general purposes of God, or to the interests of the race, that men should sin; and hence they may be held fully accountable to the justice of God for their individual transgression of law, and are so held accountable.

The penalty for the individual sins of men is a second spiritual death, not a physical death, not a separation of the spirit and the body

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<sup>1</sup>Roberts, *New Witnesses for God* 3:219-27.

of man after the resurrection, for what is achieved for man's physical life by the resurrection remains. He will not again be subject to physical death. But for his own individual sins (and this constitutes the third distinction between Adam's "original sin" and the *personal* sins of ~~other~~ men) the individual is subject to a second spiritual death, to banishment from the presence of God; his spiritual union and communion with God is broken, and spiritual death ensues—his death to righteousness. The Lord, in speaking of Adam and his first transgression, says: "I, the Lord [God], caused that he should be cast out from the Garden of Eden, from my presence, because of his transgression, wherein he became spiritually dead, which is the first death, even that same death . . . which is spiritual, which shall be pronounced upon the wicked when I shall say: Depart, ye cursed" (D&C 29:41).

So, Alma, the Nephite prophet, explained the "fall" of man, and how God gave unto men commandments, after having made known unto them the plan of redemption, even in the days of Adam, says:

God conversed with men, and made known unto them the plan of redemption, which had been prepared from the foundation of the world; and this he made known unto them according to their faith and repentance and their holy works. Wherefore, he gave commandments unto men, they having first transgressed the first commandments as to things which were temporal, and becoming as Gods, knowing good from evil, placing themselves in a state to act, or being placed in a state to act according to their wills and pleasures, whether to do evil or to do good—Therefore God gave unto them commandments, after having made known unto them the plan of redemption, that they should not do evil, the penalty thereof being a second death, which was an everlasting death as to things pertaining unto righteousness; for on such the plan of redemption could have no power, for the works of justice could not be destroyed, according to the supreme goodness of God. But God did call on men, in the name of his Son, (this being the plan of redemption which was laid) saying: If ye will repent, and harden not your hearts, then will I have mercy upon you, through mine Only Begotten Son; Therefore, whosoever repenteth, and hardeneth not his heart, he shall have claim on mercy through mine Only Begotten Son, unto a remission of his sins; and these shall enter into my rest. And whosoever will harden his heart and will do iniquity, behold, I swear in my wrath that he shall not enter into my rest. (Alma 12:30–35)

Furthermore he says—speaking of the willfully impenitent: "They shall be as though there had been no redemption made; for they cannot be redeemed according to God's justice; and they cannot die, seeing there is no more corruption (i.e. physical decay or death of the resurrected body)" (Alma 12:18).

~~Individual~~ *Men dependent on the Atonement for salvation from individual sins.* As already remarked, men having transgressed the law of God by their own personal violations of it, are helpless of themselves to make satisfaction to the justice of God, or of the law; and are just as dependent upon a Redeemer to rescue them from the spiritual effects of their personal transgression of the divine law, as from the effects of Adam's "Fall." Also, under a reign of law, God may not pardon men for their individual sins by arbitrary act of sovereign will. He may no more set aside the claims of justice unsatisfied in the case of men's personal sins than in the case of Adam's first sin. In both cases a "necessary attribute of Deity" stands in the way of the non-infliction of the penalty due to sin, viz., the attribute of justice, which not even the attribute of mercy may displace or rob. God must act in harmony with his own attributes.

*Identical principles operative in man's redemption from individual sins as in redemption from Adam's sin.* In the case of man's individual violation of law, as in Adam's sin, the inexorableness of law holds good (Hel. 14:17-18). Thus satisfaction to justice in the case of man's individual sins, like the satisfaction to justice for Adam's "original sin," must be rendered by one competent to make such satisfaction. The same necessity for one not only willing but able to make the atonement, by suffering the penalty due to the sins of all men. He must suffer for them; for the ground work of their forgiveness and restoration to union with God must be that the penalty due to their sin has been paid. This, or justice goes unsatisfied—mercy robs justice. This—satisfaction must be rendered to justice by an atonement or else the law must take its course and punishment be actually inflicted upon the transgressors, which leaves man to a life of eternal misery, alienated from God, separated from the source of spiritual excellence. Man, under such circumstances, would indeed be spiritually dead, and dead eternally, since he is helpless to extricate himself from such conditions, as a sinner cannot justify his sin, nor a criminal pardon his own crime. But to leave the punishment to be actually inflicted upon man would thwart the purpose of God with reference to man's earth life; for God designed that man's earth life should eventuate in joy, in the union of man with God. "Men are, that they might have joy" (2 Ne. 2:25). By other Book of Mormon teachers the plan for man's redemption is called "the plan of happiness," "the great plan of happiness" (Alma 42:8, 16); and as this "happiness" depends upon union and communion with God, which is but another way of saying "in harmony with the true, the good and the beautiful," it is

proper to think of the gospel as contemplating the spiritual union of man with Deity.

We conclude then that for man's individual sins as for Adam's transgression, though differing in some respects, already noted, involve the same necessity of atonement. There is the same inexorableness of law; the same helplessness on the part of man to make satisfaction for his sin; hence man's dependence upon a vicarious atonement, if he is to find redemption at all. There is the same need for ability on the part of the one making the atonement to make full satisfaction to justice by paying the uttermost farthing of man's obligation to the law; the idea of satisfaction necessarily involves that of penal suffering. This couples together the two ideas, satisfaction through expiation, or satisfaction to justice through expiation. Whosoever redeems man from his individual sins must pay the penalty due to sin by suffering in man's stead. No merely human sacrifice will be adequate. As put by Alma, the Nephite prophet: "If a man murder, behold will our law, which is just, take the life of his brother? I say unto you, Nay. But the law requireth the life of the murderer; therefore there can be nothing which is short of an infinite atonement which will suffice for the sins of the world" (cf. Alma 34:11-12). What man is equal to the whole world's sin, and the suffering due to it? Who can bear it? The answer is obvious: no man. But there remains God. What man cannot do, what no human brother can do, it may be that God can do. And that is the basis of the gospel doctrine, the doctrine of the Atonement—God will atone for the sins of man. Man incapable of saving himself, may be saved of God. God may find and save that which was lost. As it was said in the matter of atoning for man's individual sins, it must be a supreme sacrifice of atoning for Adam's "original sin," so in atoning for man's individual sins, it must be a supreme sacrifice. It must be by the sacrifice of the Highest—God! And hence an infinite sacrifice. It must be all that can be given in sacrifice—there must be no more that can be given in sacrifice for sin. Hence it is the last, and is final. As we concluded in our reflections of the Atonement of the Son of God as applied to the sins of Adam, so here: The Atonement is made by the Son of God, "who was in the beginning with God, and who was God" (cf. John 1:1). It is, then, an atonement that was made by God, the highest atonement that can be made. A supreme sacrifice, indeed! And all that could be given in sacrifice it embraces, and meets the demands of justice. Men were bought with a price, but "not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from <their> [your] vain conversation received by tradition from <their> [your] fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as [of] a lamb without blemish and without

spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world” (1 Pet. 1:18–20).

*Motive force in the Atonement.* What shall prompt a deity to make such an atonement? The answer is: two attributes of the Deity now of a long time kept in the background, viz., love and mercy. They will supply motive for the Atonement. We have seen and considered at some length the helplessness of man in the midst of those earth conditions necessary to his progress, viz., knowledge of good and evil. **God saw** man’s helplessness from the beginning; and—

so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. (John 3:16–17)

This love prompts the Son of God to suffer for the individual sins of men as well as for the sin of Adam in Eden. He undertook to pay the penalty due to each man’s sin, that there might be ground for man’s justification under the law; that mercy might claim the sinner upon conditions that love may prescribe. And so—

“By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves,” says Paul, “it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8). “The law entered, that ⟨sin⟩ [the offence] might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did [much] more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 5:20–21). And in harmony with this a Book of Mormon prophet—the first Nephi, declares: “We know that it is by grace [that] we are saved, after all ⟨that⟩ we can do” (2 Ne. 25:23).

*Man’s cooperation with God necessary to salvation.* Notwithstanding this doctrine of being “saved by grace after all that men can do,” yet in securing redemption from the consequences of man’s individual sins, the cooperation of man is required; his acceptance, through faith, of God’s plan for his salvation; acceptance of Jesus Christ and his redemptive work—obedience to him manifested by baptism, or burial in water for the remission of sin. The baptism is the symbol of the death, burial, and the resurrection of the Christ, and also the sign of the convert’s acceptance of the Christ and the Atonement he has made for the sins of men. Then also the acceptance of confirmation into membership of the Church of Jesus Christ by the laying on of hands by which comes also the baptism of the Spirit—the Holy Ghost—bringing the convert into fellowship and union with God, by which he becomes

spiritually alive—“born of the spirit,” by reason of which he has become united to the spirit life of God, and hence put in the way of eternal progress.

The gospel so far as the individual man is concerned is the “power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16) to everyone that believes it, and obeys its prescribed ordinances, and its covenant of thereafter continuing in righteousness. In the difference between the redemption from the transgression of Adam and redemption from man’s personal sins, the one being free, unconditional, and universal; and the other being free, possible to all, but conditional, and therefore limited to those who comply with the conditions, there are to be observed nice discriminations in the justice of God. Free and universal redemption comes from the consequences of Adam’s “Fall,” because that “fall” is absolutely necessary to the accomplishment of the purposes of God with reference to man’s progress; without it nothing may be done for his progress. He must know the distinctions between good and evil in order to *make* progression, though that knowledge may not be acquired but by a “fall” from a state of innocence. Therefore since that fall is necessary to these ends, justice demands that there be provided free and universal and complete and unconditional redemption from its consequences. But in the case of man’s personal sins they are not absolutely necessary to the accomplishment of any general purposes of God. Of course the earth-environment of man, including the broken harmonies as he finds them, may be necessary to the individual experience of man; but all that will abundantly come once men are at the same time free to choose, and good and evil is set before them. But what is here meant is that it is not an absolute necessity that individual men should sin, or that they sin without limit. Men can refrain from sin if they will; the power is in them. They are brought into earth life able to stand, “yet free to fall.”<sup>a</sup> They have power to choose good and to follow that instead of evil if they so elect. Therefore, while it is eminently proper that the Atonement of the Christ should be made to include satisfaction to justice for the personal sins of men, and the debt of suffering due to them should be paid, and paid vicariously, since man is powerless to offer expiation for himself, and it is needful that ample provision be made for the justification of man’s pardon; yet it is also in accordance with justice that man shall cooperate with God in bringing about the blessed result of his deliverance from the consequence of his personal sins; and that conditions shall be required as necessary to participation in the forgiveness provided, such conditions as belief in

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<sup>a</sup>John Milton, *Paradise Lost* 3.99.



and acceptance of the terms of atonement, repentance of sin, and a hearty cooperation with God in overcoming the evil, and its effects, in the human soul.

*The work of salvation: A work of sanctification as well as of justification.* Moreover, this salvation from the effects of personal sins is not only a matter of forgiveness of past sins; a matter of justification before God; a matter of reestablishing union with God, which is spiritual life; but it is a matter of sanctification of the soul; and of power to maintain the renewed spiritual life with God. It is a matter that involves human desires and human will. Surely it is unthinkable that God would hold man in union with himself against man's desire, or against his will. Such a condition would not be a "union" but "bondage." The cooperation of man then in this work of his personal salvation becomes an absolute necessity, and hence the conditions of individual salvation already noted, and which may be summed up in the fact of man's self-surrender unto God, manifested by his obedience to God under the divine law; and the declared intention of that obedience by receiving the symbols of the Atonement, to be found in the ordinances of the gospel, especially in baptism of both the water and the spirit, and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

*Spiritual and moral growth.* The attainment of the condition of Christian righteousness is a matter of character building under the favorable conditions provided by the gospel; and character building, even under favorable conditions, is a matter of slow, self-conquest. It means to follow the admonition of the chief Judean apostle, St. Peter:

Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Pet. 1:5-8)

To be fruitful in that knowledge means to be growing in grace, in knowledge of the truth, in righteousness. It means development according to type of the Christian spiritual life, which type is Christ Jesus, our Lord. "If you wish to go where God is," said the Prophet of the New Dispensation, "you must be like God, or possess the principles God possesses."<sup>2</sup> All of which, of course, may not be possessed without

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<sup>2</sup>Joseph Smith, April 10, 1842, in Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 216.

divine help, as well as by human effort. “He that lacketh these things”—the virtues above enumerated by St. Peter, and the disposition to build them up by his own effort, as well as by divine grace, “is blind, and cannot see afar off,” continues that apostle:

And hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. (2 Pet. 1:9-11)

*Phases of the Atonement peculiar to the New Dispensation of the gospel:*

(1) *Redemption from Adam’s sin unconditional; from individual sins conditional.* It may be remarked, in passing, that the distinction noted in the foregoing paragraphs of this chapter on applying the Christ’s Atonement to Adam’s sin and man’s personal sins—in the first case unconditional, and in the second conditional—is a doctrine, in modern times, peculiar to the New Dispensation of the gospel revealed to Joseph Smith; and is derived almost wholly from the teachings of the Book of Mormon (see 2 Ne. 2; 9; Alma 34; 42; Morm. 9). In that distinction the beauty and glory of the Atonement, the balanced claims of justice and mercy, shine forth as nowhere else, even in holy writ—much less in uninspired writings of men. It may be regarded as the New Dispensation’s contribution to views of the Atonement of Christ, for it is to be found nowhere else except in the New Dispensation literature. But there, in the chief summary of the things the Church of the New Dispensation believes, it is written: “We believe that ⟨all⟩ men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam’s transgression” (A of F 2).<sup>3</sup>

(2) *The free and complete redemption of little children.* From the foregoing distinction in the application of the Atonement of Christ, there arises another, viz., if redemption from the consequences of Adam’s “Fall” in Eden is to be absolutely unconditional, and universal, and that entirely through the Atonement of the Christ, and without any cooperation on the part of man, then it logically follows that if man himself remains absolutely without sin, he would stand in need of no satisfaction being made for his personal sin, and no forgiveness of **personal** sins would be necessary, since in that case sins would have no existence; and therefore the atonement of the Christ for the sin of Adam would be all-sufficient to redeem man from the power of death

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<sup>3</sup>See summary in the Prophet Joseph Smith’s Letter to Mr. Wentworth. Smith *History of the Church* 4:540.

and restore him to union with God. It follows that if any part of the human race die in this state of personal innocence, then they are redeemed by virtue of the Atonement of Christ without any other consideration whatsoever. Children dying in infancy are in this status, and therefore the host of them so dying are saved by virtue of the Atonement of the Christ for Adam's transgression. In view of this splendid truth listen to the words of the Christ himself to one of the ancient American prophets:

Behold, I came into the world not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance; the whole need no physician, but they that are sick; wherefore, little children are whole, for they are not capable of committing sin; wherefore the curse of Adam is taken from them in me, that it hath no power over them. . . . Little children need no repentance, neither baptism. . . . Little children are alive in Christ, even from the foundation of the world. (Moro. 8:8, 11-12)

No less explicit is the word of the Lord through the Prophet Joseph Smith:

But behold, I say unto you, that little children are redeemed from the foundation of the world through mine Only Begotten; Wherefore, they cannot sin, for power is not given unto Satan to tempt little children, until they begin to become accountable before me. (D&C 29:46-47)

(3) *The redemption of those who die without law: "The heathen" nations and races.* Moreover it appears that mercy has especial claims upon the nations and the races of men who have not known the gospel, the so-called "heathen" races. The first Nephi [*sic*; Jacob is speaking] in speaking of the Atonement of Christ and its effects where ~~proclaimed and rejected~~, *no law exists*, says:

Wherefore, he ⟨God⟩ has given a law; and where there is no law given there is no punishment; and where there is no punishment there is no condemnation; and where there is no condemnation the mercies of the Holy One of Israel have claim upon them, because of the atonement; for they are delivered by the power of him ⟨the Christ⟩. For the atonement satisfieth the demands of his justice upon all those who have not the law given to them, that they are delivered from that awful monster, death and hell, and the devil, and the lake of fire and brimstone,<sup>4</sup> which is endless torment; and they are restored to that God who gave them breath, which is the Holy One of Israel. (2 Ne. 9:25-26)

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<sup>4</sup>The torments of the ungodly sinners are likened unto a lake of fire and brimstone by this writer, Nephi [*sic*]. Not that the sinners are plunged into a lake of fire and brimstone as so-called orthodox Christians teach. Indeed, in the above passage

And again: “For the power of redemption cometh on all them that have no law” (Moro. 8:22). To this also agree the teachings of St. Paul: “For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law” (Rom. 2:12). I venture the assertion, basing it upon the sense of the whole passage, that the above passage should read “shall be judged without law.”

In the adjustment of things connected with the placing of men and nations and races in and during the first resurrection, it is declared in modern revelation that it shall be tolerable, at that time, for the heathen, meaning those who lived and died without law or knowledge of the gospel: “Then shall the heathen nations be redeemed,” saith the Lord; “and they that knew no law shall have part in the first resurrection; and it shall be tolerable for them” (D&C 45:54). Not that these will rise at once to the full height and perfect glory of God’s celestial kingdom; but they shall be “heirs of salvation” (D&C 76:88). They are not irredeemably lost, as false teachers and their falser creeds, though regarded as Christian and orthodox, hold. On the contrary they will come forth in the first resurrection as stated above, as also again declared in the great revelation on the various degrees of glory to which men shall attain in and through the resurrection from the dead,<sup>5</sup> and to them will be accorded the advantages of “the everlasting gospel,” the gospel which endures through all the ages to bless with opportunity of progression, the children of God.

(4) *Salvation for the dead.* The principles of the immediately preceding paragraphs bring us to the fourth great distinctive feature of the Atonement peculiar in modern times to the New Dispensation of the gospel, viz., the application of the Atonement and the whole gospel scheme to all who may not have heard it, or even heard of it; or who having heard of it in their blindness or semi-blindness, or ignorance have rejected it. This in the New Dispensation literature is generalized as “salvation for the dead.” It has its inception first in the fact that the gospel is an “everlasting gospel”; one that endures through the ages,

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there is a definition of what the lake of fire is—it is “endless torment,” which “endless torment” ever exists for the punishment of impenitent sinners—each one partaking of it to such a degree and for such time as is necessary to satisfy the demands of justice. In this very chapter above quoted Nephi says of the wicked: “And their torment is as a lake of fire and brimstone, whose flames ascend up forever, and have no end” (cf. 2 Ne. 9:16; see also Alma 12:17).

<sup>5</sup>This *is* one of the greatest revelations of the New Dispensation, and is one of the greatest monuments to the inspiration of the Prophet Joseph Smith; see Doctrine and Covenants 76.

and that to bless and save men, when they shall turn to it for its saving grace and power. Second, in the fact that the revelations of God give warrant for the belief that there is provided such a means of salvation for those who may have missed fair opportunity to understand and receive the gospel. Fuller development of this doctrine however, belongs to a place in a future chapter (chapter 47, below) where the discussion of it takes place.

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Further references recommended by Roberts for this lesson: Neander, *General History of the Christian Religion and Church* 4:497-508; Roberts, *Seventy's Course in Theology* 4:134-60, esp. "Anselm's Theory of Satisfaction"; and William Shedd, *History of Christian Doctrine*, vol. 2, bk. 5, chs. 1-7. In preparation for this chapter, Roberts encouraged extensive scripture reading and noted that the references he gives "may be greatly extended by the student." He also commented that Neander's "great work" on the history of Christianity contains "a fine treatise on the Atonement," and that the "seven chapters devoted to Soteriology" in a work by Shedd "are very illuminating in a general way on the Atonement, but do not deal with the topics of this chapter."