

Griffin's History

CHAPTER IV.

FULLER'S VIEW OF THE ATONEMENT.

In 1768 there were in England, including Wales, two hundred and thirtyeight Particular Baptist churches, twenty of which were located in London. Soon after this, Mr. Fuller, a Particular Baptist preacher, introduced his new doctrine on the atonement. It is here frankly admitted, that as a polemical writer, Mr. Fuller has had few equals in strength of mind, and depth and originality of thought; but his ingenuity of arrangement, in opposing the doctrine of special atonement, by introducing principles inconsistent with it, instead of a direct opposition, in common with the Arminian, evinces an evil design, or a palpable delusion. If the former, then how are we to account for his able defence of many glorious truths? But if the latter, then it illustrates a great truth, that zeal, erudition and power of intellect are no security against error.

It is no part of our purpose to sift the abstruse disquisitions of Mr. Fuller on this subject. There may not, however, be any impropriety in stating a few of his bold assertions, and leave the reader to draw his own inferences, viz: "Both guilt and innocence are transferable in their effects, but in themselves they are untransferable.' "Neither sin nor righteousness are in themselves transferable, "Debts are transferable, but crimes are not. A third person may cancel the one, but he can only obliterate the effects of the other. The desert of the criminal remains."

A few quotations from the Bible, by way of contrast, and the subject will be dismissed: Typical—"And when He hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat, and Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities into a land not inhabited; and he shall let go the goat into the wilderness."

Here we have a real transfer of sin, transgression, and iniquity—and that too of the Israelites, a peculiar people. Prophetic—"By his Knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." Isaiah liii and ii. Here is another clear case of transfer. Declarative—"For he hath made him (Christ) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in

him." 2 Cor. v, 21. Again, "Who his own self bear our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins should live unto righteousness." 1 Peter, ii, 24. Many more quotations might be given, of the same import, showing clearly that Christ did bear the sins of his people, as well as the effects.

Our object in calling Mr. Fuller's doctrine on the atonement a new idea was to distinguish it from that for which the Arminians contend. For when his arguments are critically examined, it will be found that he contends for an indefinite atonement. But his disquisitions on this subject are so refined and obscure, that most of his followers suppose him in favor of a general atonement—while those who do understand him, can occupy a position between the Arminian and Predestinarian, and cozen the former on the atonement, and the latter on the application.

We will now leave Mr. Fuller's theory, and examine his practice—like faith, like works—like always begetting its like. And this will require.