"But God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." Rom. 5:8

In this singularly beautiful, and masterly argument of the Apostle upon the doctrine of gratuitous justification, he presents us with an illustration of the Love of God which is exceedingly simple and yet which stamps it with an excellence that is at once mysterious and supernatural. The fact of Christ's vicarious death, as the evidence of the Divine Love, suggests to the mind of the sacred writer, the idea of the possibility of one human being giving his life for another, and so he furnishes us with a train of thought which taking its outset from the least probable to the more probable of such cases, and without even admitting that it would be certain in any
under even the most favorable circumstances, case that one man would die for another, suddenly
places before us the amazing fact that the Infinite God has done this very thing for us, has "died
for us"—when we were not only neither "righteous," nor "good," but while "we were yet sinners." A closer
examination of this train of thought will be interesting.

"For scarcely for a righteous man, will one die," that is to say: it is hardly to be expected that a man who
does all that the law and justice demands of him, while he
who is precise and exact in all his conduct and in
all his dealings with his fellow mind, doing justly
self and exacting justice from all others, should in-
spire such a feeling of devotion, and love in the hearts
of those around him, as that they would any of them
be willing to die for him, if circumstances should seem
to demand it. The utmost that could be excited in
them toward such a character would be respect, feeble, cold, unemotional respect, which would not lead to any considerable sacrifices. "But the Apostle continues, "peradventure," by bare possibility, "for a good man, some would even dare to die." We can conceive that a man whose exterior was constantly illustrating the law of kindness and of love to others, might inspire such blended admiration, and enthusiastic love toward himself as to prompt some men to venture the sacrifice of their lives for him. In this act there would be exhibited a feeling of enthusiasm and romantic devotion which may have been experienced in the history of our world. In doing this we perceive that there would be the inspiration arising
from the reflection that this man for whom I die is every way worthy of my love and is prominent in Society for his traits of extraordinary excellence. Or, by his many and disinterested acts of kindness for me, has bound me by cords of gratitude and love. Besides all this my dying for such a man would crown my memory with imperishable honor and glory. These cases the Apostle regards as the very utmost limit of human sacrifice, and the greatest possible exhibition of human love! But after admitting these things, he evidently leaves the whole matter among events merely imaginary, and wholly uncertain. Yet and he has an object and a purpose in all this— he states it as a fact that in the course of
In this world's history, an exhibition of love has been presented which overmasters all such imaginings. It covers any cases, and eclipses the brightest pictures that can be conceived of human love. By contrast then he proceeds to say, "But God commended this love to us." (I.e.) He makes His love to us more conspicuous, more remarkable, more wonderful; "in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." We were not righteous, we were not even just; we did not meet the demands of common justice. We were not kind, and loving, and affectionate; but we were infinitely removed from Him by moral corruption; we were long-continued rebels against Him; we were unbelieving and impious sinners against Him; and clamped with moral turpitude.
tude, and justly exposed to His wrath and displeasure. Yet, notwithstanding all this corruption, and enmity to God, it is in the very midst of it all "Christ died for us!"

It is well for us now to understand the true meaning of this expression. What is the meaning of the expression "He died for us?" In what sense is this true? We ascertain this by deciding the sense of the word "for" in this connection. There is a sense in which others have "died for us," but it is not the sense of the word as here used. For example: the criminal who has forfeited his life to the violated laws of his country, died for others; he died as "a terror to evil doers." The world that perished in the deluge died for others - a warning to
the enemies of God. The Israelites that died in
the wilderness Paul says died as admonitions
to us; the death of many a loved one was
made to occur solely for us; to wean us
from earthly idolatry, and to teach us the
fearful tenure of earthly joy.

But in no such sense did His die for us.
The word "for" here is to be accepted as
meaning "in our stead." But we shall never
obtain a right conception of the death of
His Priestly office. Let me repeat the words of
your catechism in answer to the question:
"How doth Christ execute the office of a Priest?"

His executed in His once offering Himself a sacrifice
without spot to God to be a reconciliation for the
sins of His people, and in making continual intercession for them." The definition Paul gives of the office of a Priest is in these words: "Every High Priest taken from among men, is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins." By analysing this verse we shall arrive satisfactorily at the proper meaning of the expression, "He died for us."

1. The Priest must be of the same nature as that for which He serves. "He must be taken from among men," He has the nature, — he is related to the race for whose welfare he acts. This is the general understanding of his relation to the race. But there is something more particular in this office.

2. He "is ordained for men" (i.e.) for individual men, particular persons; this points out special personal
relations to men. It is for them that He is expressly ordained; it is for them that He undertakes the office of a Priest; and for them He acts.

3. Then, He, in His office of Priest, acts with God as His object. So God all His actions are directed. "He is ordained for men, in things pertaining to God;" He propitiates God; it makes intercession to God; it satisfies God's justice; it pacifies God's wrath; it secures God's favor; it seals God's covenant love; it gives effect to God's eternal purpose and grace." Then we see

4. The object of His Priesthood; "that He may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins." This is indeed the great work and business of the Office of High Priest.

To offer "sacrifices for sins."

The peculiarity in His offering sacrifices which
distinguishes it essentially from all the offerings of other Priests, is that they offered other victims in sacrifice, He offered Himself. There was in their case a Priest & a victim separate from the Priest. The Priest was one thing; the victim another. But at the same time both. X't was the Priest and the victim. The Priest & the Lamb.

But it is all important that we do not obscure the true glory of X't's offering of Himself by representing Him as a mere passive victim, that punished by the will & power of another, a victim that was made to die by another, and who submitted to death as a mere endurance. "It is true He suffered death; the just for the unjust." He was killed by wicked hands; the power of Hell for a dreadful moment was let loose upon Him; "The Lord bruised Him"
"He endured the Cross," and submitted to death.

That is all true. Death seemed to be the conqueror. But in all this we must be careful not to overlook the great fact that as a High Priest He was active—not passive. He offered Himself. He did it Himself. He died not merely submissively, but by positive priestly action, giving Himself to God." Let us see how we are borne out in all this by T. S.

It tells us "He poured out His soul into death. Paul "He loved the Ch. He gave Himself for it." Again: "Ye also hath loved us and delivered Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor; He by himself purged our sins," John in the Apocalyptic Doxology.
exclaims: "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood;" X. too says of Himself: "The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many; and then again, the good Shepherd gives His life for the Sheep."

"No one taketh my life from me; I lay it down of myself. Therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life that I may take it again."

"I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." Paul again (Heb) says: "But once in the end of the world, hath He appeared to put away Sin by the Sacrifice of Himself; an utterance of inspiration" says Martin, "Which fearlessly presents the Sacrifice of the Cross as an offering in Suffering, and as suffering in offering."

We must guard carefully then against the m—
Scriptural idea that when X.t. died there was nothing in His death but the unswerving endurance of inconceivable sufferings; the being subjected to death as the penalty due to Sin. For while this is all true—the danger is that His previous life was positive action, but now at the time of His death there was nothing but passive suffering. I cannot express this grand thought in words more appropriate than these which fall from the powerful pen of a great modern Preacher:

"This representation of the Cross of X.t. is most inadequate. It exhibits the cross as the emblem of a scene of patience merely, while it conceals those glorious and glorifying aspects of it in which it is seen to be an altar of Priestly agency."
a throne of powerful action; and a chariot of victory and triumph." The grand Scriptural idea that we must carry along with us is that while Death seemed to be the conqueror—it was so because He voluntarily submitted to it. He dismissed His own Spirit. And so while "Earth, and Hell, and Heaven; Earth's rulers tremble, her kings and priests and soldiers and malefactors, assailing Him; Her Jews and Gentiles; her dumb creatures even; Earth's forests furnishing wood; Earth's streams refusing water; earth's bitterness mingled in vinegar & gall; Earth's curse embodied in her thorns, in mockery upon pain to crown Him; earth's founded steadfastness refusing to support Him; and her permanent to shine upon Him; Hell's utmost
force & fury gathered up against Him; Heaven's Sword devouring Him & Heaven's God forsaking Him; Earth & Hell and Heaven thus in conspiring action against Him unto the uttermost of Heaven's extremest justice, and earth's and Hell's extremest injustice.

What is the Glory of the Cross if it be not this, that with such action conspiring to subdue His action, His action outlasted and outlived them all, and He did not die subdued & overborne into dying. He did not die till He gave Himself in death."

Such is the scriptural doctrine of the Priestly action of X. in dying for us. When He died for us that was vicarious,
and as He died actively, voluntarily, He was no mere passive victim.

III. But why did He die for us? What was the design of His death? Was it as an Example to us? This is what some say. But aside from the cold & unmeaning force of such a theory, there is the fundamental idea that He died as a Priest—an official death. An example in office? Others say He died a Martyr to the Truth! This is no office. The same answer may be given to all the other heretical theories which men have put forth to interpret the design of His death. It was not self denial—nor self sacrifice. Nor moral influence, nor a grand governmental display of God’s anger against sin.
The true design of His death then was that He died as an expiation of our guilt and to make reconciliation for the sins of His people. He died for us as a sacrifice, as a ransom, as our substitute, that He redeemed us from the curse of the Law of God being made a curse for us, that He once suffered for sins—the just for the unjust, that He might bring us unto God. I know it is fashionable in these days when men are carried away by sensational preaching and sentimental theology, to repudiate all this as the obsolete creed of an effete system too antiquated for this era of advanced...
But I defy any man to abolish this Theory. I understand the Bible. If the atonement be not vicarious what use serves all the types and ceremonies, the altars of the Mosaic dispensation? Banish it, how account for His sufferings at all? He had no sins—

the theory that is substituted for our hold that He did not die for the sins of others. What mean the most awful yet blessed statements of Isaiah?

“He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquity. He was despised and rejected of men, a Man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. We hid as sheep such that the voice of an accusing conscience? What answer to the question “What shall I do to have peace with my Maker?”
well may the grief-stricken mourner say to these miserable comforters: "They have taken away my Lord, I know not where they have laid Him." But away with these miserable refuges of false doctrine: let me embrace the doctrine sweetly sung by the sacred poet: "Jesus, my Great High Priest, offerest His blood to die; my guilty conscience seeks no sacrifice beside: His powerful blood did once atone, and now it pleads before the throne." "Oh the sweet wonder of that Cross Where God my Savior groaned and died, My noblest life her spirit drain, From his dear wounds and bleeding side." These things being true, there are two great facts that grow directly out of them:
The Saw of God has now no claim against the Sinner who has accepted X, by faith.

"There is therefore now no condemnation.

(Che draughted man + his substitute in the War of Napoleon.)

2. This very fact carries in it a power to kindle in us a flame of never-dying love to our precious Savior. "We love Him because He first loved us."

The California emigrant's wife who did upon the burning ship to save the life of her child."

O for this love, let rocks thills their lasting silence break. And all harmonious human tongues The Savior's praises speak. "Amen! & Amen!"