

Is there no Atonement?

BY THE VERY REV. JOHN L. DARBY, D.D., DEAN OF CHESTER.

'FOR the modern Jew there is no atonement. He is a sinner like the Gentile, and needs forgiveness. He believes that he obtains forgiveness simply by repentance.' So Dr. Adler, the Chief Rabbi. He, however, is not of the modern Jews who reject the Old Testament. On the contrary, he quotes Ex 32, and refers to the words of Moses in v.³⁰. He holds that the answer of Jehovah signifies that He did not accept the idea of Atonement, and in that answer Dr. Adler finds the answer to every one who says that there is a doctrine of the Atonement in the Old Testament.

If Dr. Adler had said that no Atonement would avail for any one who did not repent, we should agree. That is the Christian doctrine, with which, of course, Dr. Adler would not agree; see He 10¹⁴, 'By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are being sanctified.' So St. John (1 Jn 1⁷), 'If we walk in the light, as he is in the light . . . the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.' St. Paul (Ro 3²⁵), 'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith, in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins.' And in Ro 5^{10, 11}, 'We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son . . . by whom we have now received the *atonement*,' i.e. the *reconciliation*.

But it is difficult to see how Dr. Adler could justify his position when we find the following in the Service for the Day of Atonement in Jews' Prayer Book:¹ 'For on that day shall he (the High Priest) make Atonement for you, to purify you from all your sins before the Lord, and ye shall be clean.' 'O our King, Thou hast vouchsafed us, O Lord our God in love, this Day of Atonement, this day of expiation of iniquity, even this joyful day of an Holy Convocation for remission, forgiveness, expiation, and atonement; and thereon to grant the remission of all our iniquities through love, and Holy Convocation. On that day he shall make Atonement for you, to purify you from all your sins before the Lord, and ye shall be clean. Our God, and the God of our Fathers, shall cause our prayers to ascend and come, approach, be seen, accepted, heard, and thought on,

and be remembered in remembrance of us, and in remembrance of our Fathers in remembrance of Jerusalem Thy City, and in the memory of Thy anointed Messias, the Son of David Thy servant, on this Day of Atonement, even on this day of Holy Convocation. Remember us thereon, O Lord our God! for good, and think on us with a blessing.' 'O pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for Thine inheritance. For on this day he (the High Priest) shall make Atonement for you, to purify you from all your sins. Before the Lord ye shall be clean.'

There is also a prayer of the Jews in exile: 'Our God, and the God of our Fathers! By reason of our sins have we been carried captives from our land, and removed from our territories, that we are not able to offer sacrifices before Thee, and no priest to make Atonement for us. . . . Let it be Thy Will to gather our dispersions from among the heathens . . . and conduct us, O Lord our God, unto Zion Thy City, that we may there perform in Thy Presence the offering of our duty, the continual sacrifices according to their order, and the additional sacrifices according to their institution; even the additional sacrifices of this Day of Atonement according to what Thou hast written for our observance in Thy Law, by the hands of Moses Thy servant.'

There are many other prayers in the same words, which can bear but one meaning, that the High Priest offered a sacrifice and made atonement, on account of which God Almighty heard the prayer of His faithful people and forgave their sins.

We cannot expect any Jew to understand the Old Testament; the whole meaning is to be found in our Lord Jesus Christ. The High Priest of the Old Dispensation was a representative of the High Priest of our profession; any sacrifice or atonement offered by the High Priest of old was efficacious only as fulfilled in the Great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God (He 4¹⁴).

But any one reading Lv 16 can see that there was an atonement made by sacrifice for all the congregation of Israel. The word 'Kipper,' translated 'Atonement' in most of the passages, is translated

¹ Printed in London by Richardson. A.M. 5531.

'reconciling' in Lv 16²⁰. As conversely, in Ro 5¹¹ the word usually translated 'reconciliation' is translated 'Atonement'—the only place in which the word 'atonement' occurs in the New Testament. Thus we may safely conclude that 'Reconciliation' and 'Atonement' are identical in meaning.

Such passages as 'God who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ' (2 Co 5¹⁸), and 'He is the propitiation for our sins' (1 Jn 2²), and our Lord's own teaching about His being a ransom, and St. Paul's teaching that it was the sacrifice of the Cross which enabled God to be at once 'just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus' (Ro 3²⁶),—all these passages show that an act was done by Jesus Christ, the only true High Priest, whereby the forgiveness of sin became obtainable on the condition of faith and repentance. That act was His death, the One and Only true Sacrifice, Propitiation, and Satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. We cannot affirm that God could not forgive sins under any other conditions, but we can surely affirm that this was the best conceivable way to effect His purpose. Perhaps without that act man could not have found a motive for repentance, and we know that by that act God com-

mendeth His love towards us, and awakens love in our hearts as the Eternal Spirit makes known to us 'the things that are freely given to us of God' (1 Co 2¹²).

The other position which Dr. Adler takes as to Prayer, namely, that 'prayer is a self-preached sermon to kindle in our hearts a spark of devotion and enthusiasm,' is as little warranted by the prayers offered by the Jews on the Day of Atonement as his statement that there was no idea of atonement in the Old Testament. The prayer, 'Hear my voice, who heareth all voices, O my God, who receiveth all supplications of them that call upon Thee, who answered Abraham, Isaac, and Israel by granting all their requests,' is enough to rebut such a statement. And the instance, 'Who answered Elijah on Mount Carmel by sending fire from heaven which consumed the sacrifice,' used as a ground of confidence that God would answer prayer, is 'clean contrary' to the idea that prayer is purely subjective. To suppose that prayer is merely an exercise of the mind and heart, educating our nature to higher aspiration, is to mock the God whom we address as Our Father and ask Him to give us all things necessary for our souls and bodies.

Literature.

CONSTANTINOPLE AND ICONIUM.

SIR WILLIAM RAMSAY has published almost simultaneously, but quite independently, two large octavo volumes, one of which is of the very highest scientific value. Let us look at the most valuable volume first. It is entitled *The Thousand and One Churches* (Hodder & Stoughton; 20s. net).

Fifty to sixty miles south-east of Iconium (which, under the name Konia, is still the capital of a great Province, with a railway station) there rises from the level Lycaonian plain an island of volcanic mountains, oval in outline, with the longer axis nearly north and south, called Kara Dagh or Black Mountain. The plain around is approximately 3300 feet above sea-level; while the highest peak of the Kara Dagh rises to a height of nearly 7000 feet. This peak is called

Mahaletch. It is crowned by a great church with a small monastery and a memorial chapel attached. Round the base of the northern part of the Kara Dagh, dominated by Mahaletch, there once lay a great city rich and prosperous. The valley is still dotted over with the ruins of it. High above the field of ruins stand a large number of great buildings. These buildings are almost all ecclesiastical, and although the Turks often use the name Kilisse (church) for a ruin which was never a church, yet in this case the name by which the valley is known to the country people, Bin Bir Kilisse, or the Thousand and One Churches, is as suitable as it is picturesque. The only Oriental exaggeration is in the number. There are really only about twenty-eight churches in the valley, and several hundred houses, cisterns, and the like.

In the year 1903 Professor Strzygowski, whose