

## THE ATONEMENT.

BY THE REV. H. W. HINDE, M.A., Vicar of Islington.

IT is said that clear views of the Atonement are seldom set forth to-day, and that the reason is not that every one knows the Gospel, but that the preachers and teachers of it are themselves not sure of their ground. Whether this is an exaggeration or not is of no account ; few will deny that there is not the same note of glorious certainty regarding the truth of the Gospel sounding forth from our Evangelical pulpits that once made us both a laughing-stock to, and the envy of, the world. It is also unquestionable that this lack of certainty about the Atonement synchronizes with an amazing indifference to the fact of sin. To the ordinary man sin is little if anything more than a myth, a relic of the teaching of less enlightened days, and the Christian pulpits and Church publications seem content it should be so. A lack of the sense of sin involves inevitably a lack of certainty concerning the truth of the Atonement. But the Atonement presupposes sin, and not only presupposes it, but looks upon it as something so terrible and damning that it required a Sacrifice of infinite worth for the reconciling of the world.

Let us then begin by recognizing a fundamental truth as regards our subject. It is impossible for us rightly to appreciate the Atonement or enter into the Mind of God concerning it until we feel the need of it. Indeed the Atonement is utterly meaningless unless there is the recognition of the awful fact of sin. No doctrine of the Atonement drawn from the Bible will commend itself to any soul which is not alive to the holiness of God and its own sinfulness. It is only when the conviction of sin has laid hold of a soul that the Cross of Christ becomes full of meaning, and the teaching of the Bible, still unreasonably true, becomes reasonable and soul-satisfying. Behind the glorious fact of the Atonement stands the awful fact of sin, and except in such a setting no true view of the Atonement can be obtained.

There is nothing more important for man than the knowledge of the Atonement, except it is the acceptance by faith of its benefits. Other subjects are vast and important, but none can be compared to this ; other events have been far-reaching in their consequences, but never was any event so fraught with tremendous issues for life and death as was the Sacrifice of Calvary, for there was offered once for all the One Sacrifice which made atonement for the sins of the whole world. Books by the thousand have been written on the subject, and lost ; sermons by the million have been preached, and forgotten ; but the Fact of the Atonement remains the most amazing thing in the world's history, unparalleled, both in the greatness of its accomplishment, and the force of its appeal. Movements of thought about the Fact have swept through the Church again and again, theories have been set forth repeatedly, some have been forgotten, some have survived only for ridicule, some still

remain for consideration, for acceptance or rejection. But the Fact of Atonement remains unchallenged and unchallengeable, and the Fact is the all-important thing. Yet this does not mean that theories of the Fact are unimportant. Far from it, it is almost impossible to conceive the acceptance of the Fact without some theory in regard to it. Nevertheless, let us concern ourselves now more with the Fact than with the various theories that have been set forth, while it necessarily follows that in dealing with the Fact we must work along the lines of some theory. Let it be on the broad lines of a general substitutionary theory rather than those of a precise narrow dogmatic theology. The Writers of the New Testament took the same line and concerned themselves far more about the Fact (and were clearer about it) than about any theory regarding it. Each generation of believers since has sought to comprehend it more fully and to explain it more adequately, but the imperfect and sin-ruined intellect of man can never grasp it or set it forth in its completeness and complexity. We cannot do more than "know in part," but the time is coming when "that which is in part will be done away," and all our present perplexities and apparent difficulties will be dissolved in perfect knowledge.

Meanwhile, let us hold fast the Fact of the Atonement and, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit, let us seek to enter more fully into the hidden truths, realizing the better how perfect is this Work of God and rejoicing the more in the peace which is ours through the Blood of the Cross.

It was, we have seen, in consequence of sin that Atonement was necessary. It was because of the immense evil of sin and its inherent effects that it was impossible for man to atone for it himself. Our iniquities separated between us and our God, and our sins hid His face from us. If the alienation is to be done away, if the estranged parties are to be reconciled and brought together again, man must be reinstated in a right relationship to God, and God must be reinstated in the heart and life of man. The Atonement set forth in Holy Scripture, the plan and performance of God, sets man right before God and is designed to draw man back to God. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth," is first of all Atonement God-wards, "will draw all men unto Me," is Atonement man-wards.

Have we such an Atonement depicted for us in Scripture? The Cross of Calvary is the answer. It is "Jesus Christ and Him crucified." This is the Central Message of the Bible and is the very heart and life of the Evangelical Message. It is the central thought of both Old and New Testament, it is the key to both. The Old Testament looks forward to the coming of One to Whom all types, ceremonies and prophecies pointed, and to the consummation of an all-sufficient Atonement. The New Testament tells us of the Offering of the One Sacrifice "once for all" and looks forward to the effectual working of its power unto salvation in every one that believes.

We may not all perhaps be prepared to say with one of the Fathers of the Church that: "The Books of Moses are written with

the Blood of the Lamb." But we have ample justification for expecting to find in these Books and in the Old Testament generally some explanation of the Lord's Death. He Himself seemed almost surprised that the Emmaus Two had not already seen Him in the Scriptures: "O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." And again a little later to the Disciples He said: "All things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name." Moreover, unless the Epistle to the Hebrews is a mighty deception or has been preserved under a marvellous misconception (with which the question of Pauline authorship has nothing to do) unless the Church has ever completely misunderstood its teaching and significance, it testifies that "the vast lines of the old Ritual and Priesthood all converged divinely upon the blessed Cross, *precisely* upon the Cross."

In the Old Testament the word Atonement is found nearly one hundred times, and usually in the phrase "to make atonement." Just as in the New Testament the words atonement, reconciliation, and the verb to reconcile, all stand for the same Greek compound in the original language, so there is always one single root in Hebrew behind the atonement of the Old Testament. Literally, it means to throw a covering over. In its emphatic form it means to apply that kind of covering which is necessary in order to the reconciliation of enemies, where there has been ground of offence. Dr. Waller put it thus: "The atonement of the Old Testament sets a shield, a cover, a barrier between the sinner and his offended God. The atonement of the New Testament takes the barrier away and unites them in the free intercourse and communion of peace." "The Old Testament states, fully and precisely, the absolute necessity of a 'cover' between God and sinners, if their meeting is to result in anything but the sinner's death."

But it is essential then for us to ask of what character was this "cover." It is obvious of course that there is no suggestion of attempting to hide anything from the all-seeing eye of the Deity with a view to deceiving Him and to make the sinner appear as otherwise than a sinner. The blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sin. The sin remained. But in virtue of those sacrifices because of what they represented, the sinner was so far reinstated that he might approach God. In effect they made atonement, though they were "but a shadow of good things to come." The Israelite might not understand the full significance of the rites and ceremonies, but nevertheless the whole system demonstrated the holiness and righteousness of God, the sinfulness of man, and the guilt

of sin, and above all, showed it was God's will that forgiveness should be secured, not on account of anything the sinner could do (either act of repentance or expiatory performance) but solely on account of the undeserved grace of God through the death of a victim guilty of no offence against the Divine Law, whose shed blood represented the substitution of an innocent for a guilty life.

Dr. Edersheim, in his book on *The Temple, its Ministry and Services*, says: "The fundamental idea of sacrifice in the Old Testament is that of substitution, which again seems to imply everything else—atonement and redemption, vicarious punishment and forgiveness. The firstfruits go for the whole products; the firstlings for the flock; the redemption-money for that which cannot be offered; and the life of the sacrifice, which is in its blood, for the life of the sacrificer. Hence also the strict prohibition to partake of blood. Even in the 'Korban' gift or freewill offering, it is still the gift for the giver. This idea of substitution, as introduced, adopted, and sanctioned by God Himself, is expressed by the sacrificial term rendered in our version 'atonement,' but which really means covering, the substitute in the acceptance of God taking the place of, and so covering, as it were, the person of the offerer. Hence the Scriptural experience: 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered . . . unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.'"

We are able to carry the matter further and to make it clearer when we turn to the occasion when the priests bore the sins of others. "The Lord said unto Aaron, Thou and thy sons and thy father's house with thee shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary: and thou and thy sons with thee shall bear the iniquity of your priesthood" (Num. xviii. 1). Andrew Bonar in his commentary on Leviticus draws attention to the two passages in Leviticus in which occurs the expression "bearing sin" and says they tell us "(1) That the individual who bears the sin of others must himself be pure from these sins. This was signified by the priest's offering, a sin-offering by which all his own sins were borne away. (2) That this expression means more than enduring the effects of sin. For a personally guilty substitute might have done this. (3) That to 'bear sin' implies that the person is reckoned guilty of the sin. Hence when it is said that the priests bore the iniquity of the sanctuary the sense is, they were reckoned guilty, until they had put that guilt upon the sacrifice, and had seen that sacrifice burnt to ashes."

How very closely the guilt was associated with the offering is seen emphatically in the language used. For instance, in Leviticus vi. 26 and ix. 15, "He offered it for sin" might as fairly be translated—He sinned it or He made it sin. The sense of "offering for sin" is evidently taken from the fact that every such sacrifice had the sin laid on it. Hence perhaps the use of the expression in 2 Corinthians v. 21, "He made Him sin for us." It is not "made Him to be a sin-offering," but much more, the sin-offering itself was "made sin." The true idea appears in Genesis xxxi. 39, "I bare the loss of it," that is, I was made sin for it, the same word

being used. The idea seems to be "He put the sin of the people on the victim till it became one mass of sin." The priest's using it as the atonement for those who presented it, made the victim become, in a manner, the receiver of their sin and of the penalty it deserved. And so our Great Sin-offering, Jesus, when slain for us, was treated as if He were the reservoir of the sin and curse that flowed, in so many streams, over man. In this sense "the Father made him to be sin for us" (Bonar, *Levit.*, p. 182).

It is impossible to do more than cursorily glance at certain aspects brought out in Scripture, and a background knowledge must be assumed. But let us turn briefly to the Suffering Servant of Jehovah. Mr. David Baron in his recently published exposition of Isaiah liii (*The Servant of Jehovah*), says: "The heart and climax of the whole prophecy is to be found in the brief section which forms its inmost centre (chaps lii. 13 to liii. 12), which, instead of a prophecy uttered centuries in advance, reads like an historic summary of the Gospel narrative of the sufferings of the Christ and the glory that should follow. . . . The doctrine it enshrines, namely, substitution, is one of the leading truths unfolded in Old and New Testaments, and it forms the central thought in this great prophecy. It is, moreover, the essence of the message of comfort with which the prophet begins (xl. 1, 2) solving the problem as to how 'her iniquity is pardoned.'"

There are few of us probably who do not regard this great section, and in particular Chapter liii, as the very Holy of Holies of the Old Testament. Here perhaps more than in any other place we see ourselves and we behold and find our Saviour. Every sentence, every minutest detail, seems to declare loudly it testifies of Him. It is indeed, as Polycarp called it, "The golden Passional of the Old Testament." Many books have been written on it, various interpretations have been put forth, but somehow it seems to speak louder than any exposition and its direct appeal sinks deeper. Mr. J. K. Mozley well says in *The Doctrine of the Atonement*, published during the War, "The precise interpretation that we give to the Servant of Jahveh is not immediately important. Whether the Servant be Israel as a whole who suffers for the nations, or an ideal Israel, a faithful remnant who suffer for the redemption of the people, or the mysterious 'Great Personage' of Dr. Cheyne's *Mimes of Isaiah Re-explored*, the expiatory virtue of whose sufferings extended not to Israel alone . . . whatever, in short, be our conclusion as to the critical problems, historic and linguistic, involved, at least we are face to face with ideas of mediation, sacrifice, and expiation, which come with the greater and more significant force because of their totally unexpected appearance."

". . . What is done in Isaiah liii. is looked on as done between Jahveh and the Servant with the deliberate intention of an expiation for the sins of others. Whatever be the force of the substitutionary offering of the Servant, it is impossible to expel the idea of substitution from the passage."

Or again, he says: "We take the heart out of the words, and

deprive the Servant of His noblest glory, if we look on his work as only an object lesson, an incentive or even a piece of voluntary self-sacrifice: it is God who has brought him to stand where others should stand, to endure what others should endure; and he stands and endures because it is God's will for him, without complaint."

This, admittedly, takes us further than most modern authorities, but it accords more nearly with the general consensus of Christian thought throughout history from the time the Church began to think. It accords with history and the types as well as with other prophecies. It is pre-eminently along this line we see the Divine unity of Scripture, for when we turn to the New Testament we find fulfilled and again set forth the same great Truth, the same Mediation, the same Saviour, the same Atonement.

The Gospels have very little definite instruction on the subject of the Atonement, and yet we find the Lord teaching He came to give His life a ransom price for many (Matt. xx. 28), and He closes His Ministry with the institution of a Sacrament for the continual remembrance of His Death and of the benefits which we receive thereby. But if the Gospels have little direct teaching on the Atonement, the great prominence given by them in narrative to the Death of Christ shows how completely that Death filled their vision and how clearly they saw in it the fulfilment of prophecy and type, and the foundation of a new dispensation. As the late Bishop of Durham puts it, "The Incarnation . . . is presented to us historically in a few firm luminous lines. But when we come to the Sacrifice, when we approach and reach the Cross, with its other side in the Resurrection, it is as if no detail were too minute, no mass of darkness or of glory too large, in the Evangelical picture. There is no biography like that of the Lord Jesus, which carries us in three or four steps of incident over nearly thirty years of the brief life below, and spends upon the closing week, the closing day, and the immediate sequel of that day, nearly one quarter of the whole bulk of the story."

This prominence given to the Death of Christ is unique. It is unparalleled. It is without analogy, not only in Scripture but in history. Dr. Dale says: "The Evangelists found no precedent for this elaborate account of the Death of our Lord in the Old Testament. The death of Moses, of Aaron, of David, is told with a severe simplicity and brevity; the writers of the ancient Scriptures felt that it is to the life of prophets and saints—not to the circumstances of their death—that the enduring interest of their history belongs. St. Luke dismisses in one brief sentence the martyrdom of an Apostle—"And [Herod] killed James the brother of John with the sword." And if the martyrdom of Stephen is told at greater length it is plainly for the sake of what Stephen said, rather than for the sake of what he suffered. . . . In the importance which the Evangelists attach to the Death of our Lord, they are but following the line of His own thought. To Him, His Death—whatever may have been its significance—was distinctly present from the very commencement of His ministry, and He constantly spoke of it as necessary to the

accomplishment of His mission. . . . Why was it that the anticipation of His Death was associated with some of the greatest moments in His history? Why did He speak of it to Peter, when Peter confessed that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God? Why did it occur to Him when the Greeks came to speak to Him at the Feast? Why did He institute a religious rite to commemorate it?

"When I try to discover the meaning of the sorrow of Christ on the Cross, I cannot escape the conclusion that He is somehow involved in this deep and dreadful darkness by the sins of the race whose nature He has assumed. If the dread with which He anticipated His Death, and if the Divine desertion which made His Death so awful, are to pass into Doctrine, I can conceive of no other form in which they can appear than that which they assume in the Apostolic Epistles—'He was delivered for our offences.' 'He died for our sins.' He 'suffered . . . the Just for the Unjust.' 'He was made a curse for us.'

"As I look, as I listen, I am driven to exclaim, 'Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.' In no other way are His sufferings explicable. . . . Either the Death of Christ was the Atonement for human sin, or else it fills me with terror and despair."

"When we pass to the Book of the Acts we find everywhere in the words, and yet more in the spirit, of the Apostles that their profound, vital, presupposition is the Lord's Incarnation. But their articulate message is His Death, its awe, its shame, its glory, its results. As for the Epistles and the Revelation, where shall we stop when once we begin to trace the sacred line of atoning blood?" (Moule.)

The subject is inexhaustible. Time is exhausted. This paper must be closed. In conclusion let me say the great theme of both Old and New Testaments is a Sacrificial Death through which alone man can have access and peace. The emphasis of the Old Testament lies rather in the appeal to God, but even there is seen the appeal to man on the ground of redemption (e.g. Ex. xx. 2), and the emphasis of the New lies in the appeal to man based on the atonement made. The Death of Jesus Christ puts man in a new position before God, it reinstates him. The Death of Jesus Christ reveals to man such boundless love in God that it presents God to man in a new light. It reinstates Him. The Sacrifice of Calvary was the work of God and in it an atonement all sufficient was made. From the same Cross, through the Risen Lord and His Church, there comes to man the call: Be ye reconciled to God. The strength of the call is in the fact of our personal interest in the Death of the Incarnate Son of God, "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree." I may not understand "how" that death atones, nor "how" that life is a ransom "instead of" many and "on behalf of" all, nor "how" it was possible for the Sinless Lamb of God to assume the responsibilities of sinful men. I may not understand all about it, but I believe it. The world believes in

gravitation, in light, in electricity and in much else, not because they can be fully explained, but because the facts are demonstrable and the effects unquestionable. So, we believe that Christ died instead of the sinner, not because we know all the reasons which led God to appoint and to accept His Sacrifice, but because the fact has been demonstrated and the effects are felt and seen in our life. This is our great Evangelical message: "Jesus our Lord was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

---

### SHORT NOTICES.

**THE GOOD NEWS. WHAT IS IT?** By John Gordon Jameson, M.P., Advocate, Barrister-at-Law. Edinburgh: *Macniven & Wallace*. 2s. 6d. net.

It is not often that Members of Parliament pose as theologians, and judging by this book we think it is just as well, considering that the author rejects the Atonement, which he tells us was first elaborated by *St. Paul* in the Epistle to the Hebrews! So, in the face of scholarship, he has settled the vexed question as to the authorship of that letter, and he declares that the teaching is not that of Jesus. He seems to have forgotten that Christians regard the later books of the New Testament as inspired equally with the Gospel narratives. No, we cannot regard this worthy and well-meaning M.P. as a safe guide. It may be stupid of us, but we prefer the author of Hebrews!

**WHY DID CHRIST DIE? OR, THE GREATEST THEME IN THE WORLD.** By F. L. E. Marsh. London: *Marshall Brothers*. 5s. net.

In certain quarters the Atonement is out of fashion, indeed there are preachers who almost denounce it. But the author of this very valuable exposition regards it as one of the fundamentals. He has in his previous volumes shown himself to be an adept in the art of arranging Scriptural subjects in a helpful way, and he has prepared a very careful and complete survey of Bible teaching on this central theme, indeed it is dealt with from almost every possible point of view. Four errors in regard to the doctrine are effectively disposed of in the last chapter.

**THE BELIEVER'S FUTURE.** By the Rev. Ernest Baker of Johannesburg. London: *Seeley Service & Co.* 2s. 6d. net.

A series of eight short lectures or addresses on the subject of Immortality. In the first the author sets out the evidence for a future life and in the three following he gives us a well-arranged argument for the consciousness of the soul after death. He holds that "the saints do not now go to Hades." But if so, they must be in Heaven, a view not free from difficulty, but one that was held, if we mistake not, by the late Canon Garratt. On the whole, Mr. Baker has given us a useful contribution to the study of eschatology, even though we cannot accept all his conclusions.