

Heart of Africa, his roving soul sought the Horn. A waterless district—four tribes constantly at war with each other—eight hundred miles of exploration in a rickety car—but in the end a Church was built, a Church Council formed, 150,000 people reached and three stations established—all in two years.

The third. From Lake Rudolf Alfred had caught sight of another land, Ethiopia. The call could not be refused. Even committees could not be consulted, for the case was urgent. Alfred took the plunge, crossed the frontier in March, 1931, and made his way to the capital by caravan through country, until recently, almost unknown to Englishmen. Another trek, this time of seven hundred miles, was over. The result within four years was a band of missionaries, many of them I.V.M.F. members, a body of national evangelists, the Bible in Amharic, and a bookshop selling gospels, and then war in its most frightful and cruel form, with the temporary eclipse of a most promising work, and the martyrdom of some of the best of their young Ethiopian workers.

And to-day? Ethiopia is open again. Opportunities abound. Does the spirit of Alfred still stir the hearts of the men and women of the I.V.F.? Does the appeal of Alfred's great leader strike a resonant chord in the depths of the present Christian student's being?

*"If Jesus Christ be God, and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him."* H.A.E.H.

## "What do we mean by— Atonement"

BY THE REV. F. D. KIDNER, M.A.

**W**HY surround the Atonement with mystery and theological jargon? Cannot it be as simple as the welcome given to the Prodigal?" We meet this question to-day in many places and many forms, and let it be said at the outset that simplicity is the purpose of the Atonement: for it is the removing by God of all that would bar the way of the returning sinner to Himself. But that is not to say that our directness of access was lightly won.

A little reflection will remind us that there are many aspects of God's relationship to man, and many directions in which sin has wrought havoc. An Atonement which failed at any of these points would be inadequate to meet our need. Perhaps this need will best be shown by an example from history of a reinstatement which was a tragic failure.

There is a record in 2 Sam. xiii. 23-39, of the murder of Ammon planned by Absalom. There follows in the next chapter the story of Absalom's full restoration to the position he had occupied before. But as the story moves on we find that we might well ask, at each stage, "Has the restoration yet taken place?"—and each time we should have to answer: "Yes and no." The murderer was put right with the law, brought back from exile and treated as an innocent man (2 Sam. xiv. 23-33); in that sense he was fully restored. But in another important sense he was still as far away as before: the stigma of his crime kept him for two full years estranged from his father

(xiv, 24, 28, 33). This too, in its turn, was dealt with ; but a third need then remained, namely, the reclaiming of Absalom from his career of lawlessness. Nothing was attempted in this realm, and in consequence he set to work at once to abuse his liberty. Now for convenience we might label these three aspects of restoration respectively, "*legal*," "*personal*," and "*moral*"; and it should have emerged that in such a case as Absalom's we cannot return an unqualified "yes!" to our question while the threefold need is seen to remain unsupplied in any one department.

At this point we should pause and enquire whether the analogy is taking us in the right direction. The answer is given by the nature of the scriptural terms used in connection with the Atonement. These terms, for the most part, are found to group themselves round the three aspects which we have noticed. In the "*legal*" category we find such words as "guilty," "condemned," "under the curse," etc., describing the state of sinners, and "justification" and "remission" speaking of their salvation. In the "*personal*" category there are many words such as "alienated," "enemies," and "afar off," on the one hand, and "reconciled" and "forgiven," on the other. In the "*moral*" category we could collect numerous statements describing our helplessness in the grip of sin, and the provision for our release ("ransom," "redemption," "deliverance," etc.) through Christ crucified. But there is at least a fourth aspect to the Atonement which finds no parallel in the human story of David and Absalom. It arises from the unique relationship of creatures to Creator, whereby we are under the obligation to present ourselves to Him without spot, "in the beauty of holiness." It is here that we see sin in its clearest light as an outrage against that holiness, rendering us utterly unclean and unfit for His presence. Here, we will learn most from Leviticus and from its New Testament fulfilment, Hebrews, of sin seen in this setting; and of the Atonement as the one sufficient sacrifice and God-given propitiation.

So much for the complexity of our need, and the many-sided sufficiency of the Atonement. In passing let it be said that the golden rule for those who want to philosophise on this subject is, do not over-simplify. Most modern theories go astray through excluding some category which fails to fit neatly into their scheme ; but it is better to be comprehensive than neat. In terms of the question asked above concerning Absalom's restoration, we must not make God's answer "Yes and No" but an unqualified "Yes!"

It remains to glance briefly at the means by which the Atonement was accomplished. There is not the space to enter deeply into this great subject, but it will help to put us on the right track if one consider in miniature some of the issues involved in such an undertaking. We return to the story of Absalom.

It is a study in inadequacies. In the *legal* realm, David took a short cut to his objective. In his longing for Absalom he substituted caprice for equity, relaxing the law instead of administering it. A revealing comment in 2 Sam. xiii. 39 shows up the favouritism which underlay David's subsequent actions, and the ease with which he could put out of his mind the wrong suffered by Absalom's victim. But God is not David, to tear up a decree which becomes inconvenient, or to be talked out of an irksome decision ; in the Atonement we look for our need to be met, not evaded. The New Testament nowhere makes excuses for our sin, or attempts to go back upon the curse of the law. That curse was not lifted ; it was borne for us. It is by virtue of this that

God can be declared both "just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. iii. 26).

Without this there would be no foundation for a purely *personal* forgiveness; for we cannot expect or wish God to act as David did. It is a fallacy, arising out of examples of human weakness and sin, to suppose that it is possible to act "purely in this or that capacity" when such an action is in defiance of obligations in some other capacity. David the father artificially dissociated himself from David the king, to receive Absalom. Are we to ask God to do likewise? But there is a further reason why David's personal forgiveness, even had it been justifiable, was insufficient; for it was only in a secondary sense that Absalom had sinned against David. Our sin, on the other hand, is both primarily and ultimately against God; He it is to whom we are accountable; He alone can forgive. And at Calvary "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor. v. 19). That is indeed adequate.

There is little need to elaborate further the imperfections of David. "I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever"; and the glory of the Atonement is that it is *God's* doing from first to last, with all the scope and all the grace and all the sufficiency which mark His handiwork. Let us accept and rejoice in its fullness.

## India Today

BY EBENEZER B. VINE

THERE is a danger at a time of world-wide convulsion, when the minds of men are preoccupied with many things, that matters of vast importance should be allowed to pass without securing the thought and attention that is their due. This seems peculiarly true of the situation in India just now. The evidence before us seems to indicate that considerably more interest is being displayed by politically-minded people, touching Indian matters, than is being shown by Christian people in the far greater concerns which bear upon those things that are bound up with Christ and His Church in that land. Great sympathy has without doubt been evoked for the Government, for the far-reaching attempts that have been made within recent days to find a basis of common agreement, as between the British Government and the Indians themselves, or those who affirm that they speak for such. The one basic fact that is apparently almost entirely lost sight of, is that the real problem is fundamentally a spiritual one.

Viewed governmentally for the moment, it will be seen that to control a population of some 400,000,000 people is no small matter. The difficulties are vastly increased by the fact that this mass of people are of diverse religions, with the various sections for ever in violent antagonism one with the other: the 220,000,000 Hindus showing unending enmity toward the 90,000,000 Mohammedans, and *vice versa*. Another class altogether is the body of 15,000,000 Buddhists, while at the bottom of the scale are to be found that strange mass of 60,000,000 Untouchables or Outcastes; a body at last, after the oppression of many centuries, becoming tremendously vocal. Amidst these numerically overwhelming sections of the population there exist some 3,000,000 who profess adherence to the Christian Protestant faith. Here, then,