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These are Divinely sanctioned methods of dealing with this particular problem which now confronts the Church ; and their adoption very largely depends upon the realization by us clergy of the responsibility which they involve for us.

The Biblical Doctrine of the Atonement.

By the REV. MARCUS JOHNSON, A.K.C.

I.

IT is obvious that our word "atonement" is an ambiguous word. Although, according to the generally received derivation, an excellent instance of a most expressive Anglo-Saxon term, it is capable of a twofold meaning. It may signify either the *state* of being at one, or the *means* or *process* by which that being at one is effected. The word, therefore, may be used theologically to signify either the reconciliation which has taken place between God and man, or the sacrifice of Christ's death as the procuring cause of that reconciliation, or even as a comprehensive term embracing both the cause and the effects flowing from it. There can be little doubt that this ambiguity is the source of much confusion of thought and even of doctrinal error.

When we turn to the Hebrew no such doubtfulness of meaning meets us. The word which is consistently used for "atonement" throughout the Old Testament Scriptures is כִּפֻּרִים (coverings), a plural substantive derived from כָּפַר (to cover). An early instance of the use of the word occurs in the remarkable verse (Lev. xvii. 11) : "For the life of the flesh is in the blood : and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls : for it is the blood that maketh atonement by reason of the life" (R.V.). The root idea, then, of "atonement" in the Bible is this of "covering." Now, whatever view be taken of the Fall, it cannot fairly be denied that the Bible represents man as separated from God and conscious of that separation. The whole Old Testament

sacrificial system—as also the sacrifices of heathendom, pointing backward to a common point of origin with the sacrifices of the Bible—bears witness to the consciousness of this division and of the desire for reunion. The blot was there—how should it be covered? The gulf apparent—how should it be bridged? Man must have felt his incapacity to take the first step. An instinctive knowledge of the law of continuity must have taught him that what was done could not by him be undone, that he could not change the past nor turn aside the Nemesis from which he vainly desired to hide. "We will suppose," it has been said, "the case of . . . a primitive man, totally unacquainted, from whatsoever cause, with any portion of a Divine revelation. He embodies in his imagination the phenomena of the atmosphere as the attributes of a personal deity whom we may call Indra. From Indra he receives the bounties of the sun and rain which mature his harvests, and also the floods, torrents, tempests, and thunder and lightning, which make him fear. He surrounds this deity with a moral atmosphere of inflexible, uncompromising remorselessness—the moral shadow, we may say, of the character he attaches to the physical heavens. Suppose, then, that one day, when he and his sons are reaping their harvest, their great desire being for a cloudless heaven to dry their sheaves, an ominous cloud gathers; the heavens are soon black, the forked lightning darts with angry quiver from cloud to cloud and from cloud to earth, the thunder seems to split the firmament in rage, till out darts a forked tongue of flame and slays his youngest son at his feet. Will he regard this as Indra's retaliation on account of some offence he has been guilty of? Suppose it is so. What would human nature suggest to him to do in order to escape, if possible, Indra's further vindictiveness? Is there anything in his nature that would lead him to cut the throat of his eldest son and, hurling him on a pile of faggots, to consume his body with fire as a holocaust to appease the supposed wrath of Indra, and so, under the idea of sacrificing a substitute of the greatest worth in his estimation, to ward off danger from himself? Would he be likely to fling the blood

of his lamb or his kid towards the heavens, under the idea of sheltering himself from Indra's retaliative stroke? Or could anything in his own nature suggest to him that Indra required some voluntary sacrifice? We cannot touch even the elements of such a thought in man's nature, much less trace their development. There is nothing whatever, surely, in human nature to suggest such thought or action."[1] At the same time, the absence of any positive command from God originating sacrifice, especially when contrasted with the distinct reference to the origin of the Sabbath in Gen. ii., is pointed to as at least impairing, if it does not actually disprove, the formal revelation of sacrifice by God. But may we not even here recall the danger of the argument *e silentio?*

Moreover, the importance of this question has been, perhaps, exaggerated. For whether sacrifice originated in a formal Divine command, or whether, already existing, God made use of it for the spiritual comfort and edification of men, that He did so use it is certain. We observe in the sacrifices of the Old Testament three inherent ideas—the self-dedicatory, the eucharistic, and the expiatory. In one sacrifice one of these ideas may be prominent, in another sacrifice another of them, but all entered in some degree into every expression of the conception of sacrifice, which itself is not a simple, but a complex idea. An example of the self-dedicatory sacrifice was the burnt-offering; of the eucharistic, the meal-offering (without blood) and the peace-offering (with blood); of the expiatory, the sin-offering and the trespass-offering. It is no doubt true that in the patriarchal sacrifices the dedicatory and eucharistic ideas are prominent rather than the expiatory. But it does not follow that the order of time with regard to these ideas was the order of importance. Rather, perhaps, it was to be expected that the more profound idea of propitiation would be reached later. That the most important place in the whole Jewish sacrificial system was occupied by the *sin-offering*—in which the central

[1] "An Essay on Sacrifice," by Rev. R. Collins, M.A., in "Pulpit Commentary," Leviticus, p. viii.

idea is that of expiation by means of the blood—becomes clear from an examination of the order of sacrifice in its perfect form, as given in Lev. viii. The burnt-offering could only be offered after the sin-offering had been accepted. The meal or peace offering was merely a portion of the burnt-offering. The solemn use of the blood was again emphasized by the ceremonies of the Passover, and also in the inauguration of the covenant of Sinai (Exod. xxiv.), while the great truth which was taught by the ritual of the annual Day of Atonement was the necessity for expiatory sacrifice in order to re-enter into covenant with God. The life of the offender was evidently regarded as forfeited for his sin, but the blood of the victim was accepted instead by the ordinance of God's mercy. For after the slaying of the one goat the high-priest laid his hand upon the head of the other goat, confessing the sins of the people, that it might visibly do that which was implied in other sin-offerings—viz., bear those sins away. Indeed, in regard to all cases of sin-offering, the custom appears to have been for the offerer to lay his hand—not the hand of his slave or his wife, or his substitute, but his own hand—forcibly on the head of the sin-offering, confessing his sins in general or special terms, and to say, "Let this be my expiation."[1] It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the sin-offering taught the truth of sin in man, and that man's life was forfeited on account of that sin, but that God in His mercy had provided an atonement by the vicarious death of an appointed victim. How far the inevitable weakness in the sacrificial system—viz., the separation which existed between the priest, the offerer, and the victim—was felt at different times and by different persons it is impossible to say. But the feeling of imperfection must have been there; the consciousness that the "blood of bulls and of goats"—irrespective of the great Type to which this points, as the prophetical writings showed—"could not take away sins" must have been experienced. If the sinner were not to die himself, then the conscience of men demanded a perfect substitute—one of like nature with the sinner, one who was so

[1] See quotation from the Mishna in Outr., "De Sacr.," I., c. xv., § 10.

involved in the consequences and penalty of the Fall that the guilt and penalty of the race belonged to him to bear, one who as priest and victim and offerer in one should voluntarily offer up himself.

The Epistle to the Hebrews, as it has been almost universally understood—though it is alleged by Archdeacon Wilson in his Hulsean Lectures for 1898-1899 to have been "strangely misunderstood"—declares the valuelessness in themselves of the "gifts and sacrifices," the "carnal ordinances," of the Mosaic system, as unable, "as touching the conscience," to "make the worshipper perfect" (Heb. ix. 9, 10), and asserts that it was only in virtue of their typical character that they had a spiritual meaning. The same Epistle goes on to show that in the Person of Jesus Christ offerer and victim and priest were completely united. Being one with man, the Representative of the race, He could offer a willing sacrifice of His own blood: ordained by God by a solemn oath (Heb. vii. 20, 21), He was and is man's one High-Priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek, and the kingdom of heaven is open to all believers.

Now, an examination of this Epistle makes it clear that the Atonement is there conceived of and represented under two aspects—first, that of a *perfect obedience;* secondly, that of a *vicarious sacrifice.* In His obedience Christ was the Representative of that sinlessness which is the natural duty of man, impossible to him since the Fall, but to which he is yet summoned on being reconciled to God by Christ, for He, "though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect"—*i.e.*, by that suffering (see chapter ii. 10)—"He became unto all them that obey Him the author of eternal salvation" (Heb. v. 8). Here is brought prominently into view the value of the Incarnation, the life of humility, temptation and suffering, to which the death was the fitting, and, indeed, the inevitable, close. In that perfect obedience the burnt-offering of Judaism found its Antitype, and in following that example we present our bodies a living sacrifice unto God (Rom. xii. 1).

But if the Epistle to the Hebrews—to impartially study which is to gain a clear idea of the Biblical doctrine of the Atonement—if this Epistle lays stress on the obedient life of Christ as one aspect of that Atonement, it certainly lays no less emphasis upon the sacrificial, expiatory, and vicarious character of His death as another. The writer points to the perfect antitypical fulfilment in Christ of the ancient sin-offering, and especially of the particular sin-offering with which the High Priest entered the Most Holy Place on the great Day of Atonement (Heb. ix. 7-12); and Christ's suffering without the city is compared to the burning of the public or priestly sin-offerings without the camp (xiii. 11-13). St. Paul, in his letters to the Corinthian Church, pursues the same idea, declaring that "our passover also hath been sacrificed, *even* Christ" (1 Cor. v. 7); and yet further, using language from which anyone but an inspired Apostle would have shrunk, he says of the Lord, "Him who knew no sin, He made to be sin on our behalf (2 Cor. v. 21).

In connection with this part of the subject, there are certain words employed in the New Testament whose force of meaning cannot be disregarded—viz., the words ἱλασμός and ἱλαστήριον, meaning expiation or propitiation, and pointing to the fact that God's good-will towards mankind has been gained by the offering up of Christ as the sin-offering (as in Rom. iii. 25, and the familiar passage in 1 John ii. 2, "He is the propitiation for our sins"); the word ἀπολύτρωσις, meaning redemption, ransom (ἀπό giving the force of "completeness"), denoting the deliverance from the consequences of sin, secured by Christ and received by those who are in union with Him (as in Rom. iii. 24, 1 Cor. i. 30, and Ephes. i. 7, "in whom we have our redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses"); the word καταλλαγή, implying a thorough change, and meaning reconciliation or the blessing of recovered favour from God, and branching out into the two meanings of—(1) reconciliation of God with man procured by Christ on the cross (as in 2 Cor. v. 19, "God was in Christ reconciling the

world unto Himself"), and (2) man's reconciliation to God, the removing of enmity and alienation on our part (as in Rom. v. 10, viii. 7; Ephes. ii. 16; Col. i. 21; Jas. iv. 4); the word *θυσία*, meaning sacrifice, and the term used for animals slain in sacrifice (as in Heb. x. 12, "but He, when He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever," etc.; and, lastly, the word *ἄφεσις*, meaning remission or sending away (as in Heb. ix. 22, "apart from shedding of blood there is no remission"; and Matt. xxvi. 28, "My blood of the covenant which is shed for many unto remission of sins"). Now, it is to be observed that all these plain and significant terms are used in connection with *the death of Christ upon the cross*, and therefore, "if words mean anything, these must mean that the Atonement of Christ made a change in the relations between God and man from separation to union, from wrath to love, and a change in man's estate from bondage to freedom. In it Christ stands out alone as the one Mediator between God and men; and His Sacrifice is offered once for all, never to be imitated or repeated."

(*To be continued.*)

"Not of Moses, but of the Fathers."

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AFTER citing from the Old Testament, our Lord in this instance added His own explanatory words—"Moses hath given you circumcision (not that it is of Moses, but of the fathers"—John vii. 22). The Book of Genesis relates how God made a covenant with Abraham, and appointed circumcision as its sign. We are told that this rite already prevailed among the Arabs, Egyptians, Phœnicians, and other peoples; although, rather remarkably, circumcision was not practised by the Canaanites, to whom scholars of the Wellhausen school attribute so much of Israel's culture. The Father of the Faithful received circumcision as the token of a religious covenant for