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JOURNAL OF
THE TRANSACTIONS
OF
The Victoria Institute,
OR,
Philosophical Society of Great Britain.

SECRETARY: E. WALTER MAUNDER, F.R.A.S.

VOL. XLVI.



LONDON:

(Published by the Institute, 1, Central Buildings, Westminster, S.W.1.)

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1914.

550TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING.

HELD IN THE ROOMS OF THE INSTITUTE, ON MONDAY,
FEBRUARY 2ND, 1914, AT 4.30 P.M.

DR. J. W. THIRTLE, M.R.A.S., TOOK THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the preceding Meeting were read and confirmed. The CHAIRMAN introduced the Rev. H. J. R. Marston, and said that Mr. Marston would not read his paper, but would give them a general synopsis of it. The paper, as printed and submitted to the Meeting, is as follows :—

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT. By
THE REV. H. J. R. MARSTON, M.A., Late Fellow of the
University of Durham.

Some prefatory observations are desirable in order to explain and justify the form and tenor of the following Lecture.

I.—The material here presented to the Members of the Institute is part of a book on the subject which is in course of production by the Lecturer. The consequence is that the composition, considered as a literary effort, may appear loose in connection; and may perhaps contain some unavoidable repetition. If this be so, I beg the Members of the Institute to understand and to pardon; assuring them that there has been neither haste nor carelessness in the preparation of the paper. On the contrary, the matter of the lecture has been long and industriously pondered and carefully put together.

I venture to invite special regard to the title of my subject as it stands at the head of the paper.

I have not endeavoured to formulate a theory of "The Atonement."

I incline to believe that Atonement is prior to Christianity; and wider than the Bible. It would seem to be inherent in the beliefs and feelings of the human race. It is certainly far older

than Leviticus; which is probably a regulative code, not an inaugurating charter. Throughout that wonderful book, so it seems to me, "the instinct for Atonement" is taken for granted.

I further incline to believe that the New Testament takes that same instinct for granted too. The death of the Lord Jesus and the teaching of his Apostles fixed and illuminated for all time what was the meaning, the value, and the limits of that instinct. Hence it seems to be correct to speak of "The Christian doctrine of Atonement"; rather than to treat of "The Atonement" as if it were a new and isolated fact in human history.

Some misgiving has been expressed as to whether the subject of Atonement is not too theological to come properly within the ken of a Philosophical Society. That misgiving may be allayed by two considerations. The first is that the very nature of our Society compels it to attend to the outstanding aspects of the Christian Faith; and to explain and to defend them. This is what we are for. Among these the Atonement is so important that we cannot possibly pass it by. To attempt to justify it to the modern conscience is a noble and very useful task.

The second is that the method which I have followed in this lecture invites discussion from Historical and Ethical students. Recent Travel, Comparative Religion, and Moral analysis of Human Nature are all to be heard on the subject with attention and helpfulness. Light from many quarters is welcomed, so long as it be light.

II.—The method which I have followed in this lecture is, I think, unusual. Most writers on the Atonement have dealt with the subject from what may be called the internal point of view. They have considered it either with reference to the attributes of God, or the intuitions of men. They have declared that such and such views are required because God is just; or because He is merciful; or because man cannot believe that God would make such and such demands. From the time of Anselm to the time of McLeod Campbell, this way of treating the subject has been prominent.

It must be allowed that a method which has commended itself to many good and gifted men, has much to be said for it. And I cannot expect that those who hear or read this lecture with minds accustomed to follow the lead of Anselm and Campbell, of Maurice and the elder Magee, will readily approve the method adopted by me. They are certain to

think it narrow and jejune ; and they may also think that it borders upon the splitting of verbal hairs, or upon grammatical pedantry.

I would remind such objectors that the fundamental principle of the Reformation was this, that exegesis is the key to theology. By this maxim it reversed the proceedings of the Middle Ages, which were formed upon the principle that theology is the key to exegesis. I cannot see why this principle, which has been fruitful in spiritual results of the first importance, should not be applied to the study of the Atonement. To my own feeling Systematic Theology from Calvin to Ritschl has been blighted and deformed by the tendency to separate itself from the results of exact New Testament scholarship.

This address, at all events, if it has erred, has not erred in that direction. I have rigorously endeavoured to follow the teaching of the New Testament ; I have never even cared to ask whether the results arrived at can be made to harmonise either with what are supposed to be the Divine attributes, or with those alleged intuitions of men which some people so studiously endeavour to conciliate.

For me the New Testament ought to have the first and the last word in this, as in all religious enquiry ; and that because of its unique and specific possession of the *charisma* of Inspiration. I do not for a moment question that a subject so wonderful and comprehensive as the Christian doctrine of Atonement may be lawfully treated by more methods than one. I hail with thankfulness the revived interest in this central article of Christian believing and Christian doing : It is a sign of reviving Christian life itself. Life is manifold ; and every living enquiry must be conducted in manifold ways. But I venture to think that the method followed in this paper is among the first in importance, and likely to lead to clear and far-reaching thought upon the subject.

In this spirit and under these convictions, these thoughts are offered as a contribution towards a clearer view of the work of Our Lord in the putting away of sin. It is committed to the blessing of God, and commended to the favourable perusal of Christian people, in a time of many transitions, and of much searching of heart ; yet a time when the hearts of multitudes are reaching out after a fuller and surer knowledge of truth as it is in Jesus.

There are two remarks which I ask leave to add to these introductory observations. The first is this, namely, that I believe in the stability of the laws of language, and especially

of the Greek language. I hold strongly that the Greek of the New Testament is Greek; not a patois, nor a jargon. What has been called "grammarless Greek," if it ever existed anywhere, is certainly not the Greek of St. Luke and St. Paul, of St. Matthew and St. James, of St. Peter and St. John. The Apocalypse is, of course, the book in the New Testament the Greek of which most frequently defies the laws of grammar. The sidelights thrown upon it by recent researches into the Greek of the papyri, are often interesting and sometimes suggestive. I would welcome all such light; but I still believe that St. John in his latest years made no deliberate attempt to use language in defiance of the laws of speech and thought. With this exception, however, the books of the New Testament should be studied with the grammar in our hand; and under the belief that the sacred writers used the words which they did use so as to be understood by all sorts of readers who had learned their language as we learn ours.

The second remark that I would make is this:—When appeal is made to the conscience or reason of man to settle whether the Christian doctrine of Atonement is true or not true, to what conscience and to what reason of what man is that appeal made? If Rousseau declared the doctrine to be false because it contradicted his moral sense, I rejoin, what does that signify? Of what value to anybody was Rousseau's moral sense, seeing it was of no value to himself? If his great contemporary, Bishop Butler, should declare that the doctrine repugnant to the moral sense of Rousseau was agreeable to the moral sense of men in general, who would hesitate to follow the bishop, and disregard the sentimental savage from Geneva? And this is but a sample of the difficulties in which we are landed when we follow the method usually followed in enquiring about the Atonement. It is certain that so far as history can teach us, a sense of the need for propitiating God is found everywhere. This is a strong proof that such propitiation is actually possible; since "nature does nothing in vain." And this pathetic and venerable sentiment is of far more consequence than the objection to it raised by any particular thinker; that objection might be very strong if it were very general; but otherwise it seems to me of little account.

Let anyone, however, consult the writings of those who have treated the Atonement on abstract principles; and they will find that these writers differ widely between themselves; and indeed that they agree in little else than in the habit of raising objections to some or other part of the Christian doctrine.

III. NEW TESTAMENT VIEWS OF SIN.

The sacred writers view sin as bondage, as enmity, as defilement, or as hampering limitation. They assume everywhere that men are conscious of being guilty, miserable, impotent. We may safely affirm that this assumption is sustained by an experience so vast and varied as to be practically universal. When St. Paul wrote, "O wretched man that I am," he wrote as the prolocutor of the human race.

In this light the Christian doctrine is only the highest confession of the need for Atonement; but if the Gospel be the universal religion, it must offer some doctrine of Atonement; and if it also be the Divine religion, it must also offer the best doctrine of Atonement; and accordingly the New Testament announces that God is the author of a fourfold process. He is the Redeemer, the Reconciler, the Consecrator, the Releaser.

The New Testament, moreover, intimates that in thus proceeding God acted harmoniously with His essential character. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself."

"God set forth Jesus Christ to be a propitiation in His blood through faith."

"When we were enemies it was to God that we were reconciled by His Son's death."

"The Father sent the Son to be a propitiation for our sins."

"It was the God of Peace Who brought again from the dead the Lord even Jesus."

"It is God Who commends His Love in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

So confident is the New Testament of the truth that redemption had its origin in the love and will of God that St. Peter declares that Christianity was sent into the world in order that men's faith and hope might be in God.

The awful and abrupt impact of God upon the sinful world is that which imparts to the Christian doctrine of Atonement its signal and disquieting grandeur. Against it, therefore, rise all lawless sentimentalities; all vicious levities; all insolent sophistries; all despairing incredulities. The insurrection is sometimes exasperated and inflamed by the indiscretion of Christian preachers; but it is provoked by the doctrine itself.

In attempting therefore to sum up apostolic teaching on Atonement, while I would avoid everything that may justly give offence, I cannot hope, nor do I wish, to escape from that

measure of hostility which is inevitable; and which even St. Paul lamented when he wrote to the Philippians about the enmity towards the Cross of Christ.

For the New Testament accuses man of guilt, misery, and impotence; and charges him with being responsible to some very real degree for each of these three calamities. It announces also a provision made by God which corresponds with these calamities. It declares that in Jesus Christ God's love has entered into the world of time and history on what may be called a campaign of redemption. This love is just and pure; and in fulfilling this pure and holy purpose the Son of God became incarnate that He might reconcile and release in reality as well as in truth. The Incarnate Son incurred the total liability of the race which He came to redeem; even the sacred wrath against sin which is essential to the Godhead was to the full vicariously felt by Him. So completely was this the case that nothing now remains over to be demanded by eternal perfection.

Since in the intention and knowledge of the representative Christ, Man corresponded with all those demands, a true satisfaction for sin has actually been made.

Thus a mutual reconciliation of God with the world was brought to pass by God Himself: and love in equity invites all men to become reconciled with God. As, believingly, we remember the speaking of the blood of sprinkling, whose voice of endless power allures all souls, peace with God obtains an inward ascendancy, which is accompanied by a penitent recoil from that which cost the shedding of the Redeemer's blood. Thus is effected an actual release from the habits and even from the impulses of sin. The Atonement becomes an ethical force; its influence begins to tell directly upon the springs of life and character.

IV.—THE DOCTRINE OF THE BLOOD OF JESUS.

The New Testament is penetrated by the teaching that an intimate connection subsists between the Blood of Jesus and the putting away of sins. The doctrine is supported by each of the four Gospels; by the Acts of the Apostles, by the language of St. Paul, by St. John in his first epistle and in the Apocalypse; and by St. Peter in his epistle addressed to the churches of the dispersion.

The apostle to the circumcision and the apostle to the Gentiles equally proclaim this intimate connection. The church

of the Hebrews and the church of Rome, as also the churches in Asia were all taught that a profound and inviolable association linked the forgiveness of their sins with the shedding of the blood of Jesus.

From the middle of the ministry of Our Lord to the closing decade of the first Christian century this doctrine was decisively and abundantly attested.

The fact is so conspicuous and so impressive that it cannot be passed by with a cursory notice. It demands to be weighed and measured. For it proves that there dwelt in the apostolic mind the conviction unbroken and diverse that

“Without shedding of blood there is no remission.”

Apart from any belief in divine inspiration this concurrent testimony is remarkable enough. Viewed in the light of any real and reasoned belief in that inspiration, the testimony is significant to the highest possible degree.

The teaching of the apostles about the blood of Jesus was much more than a survival in them of Hebrew habits of mind formed under the influences of the ancient Law. For it is announced in its most trenchant formula in the epistle to the Hebrews ; an epistle which more than any other writing in the New Testament discredits the sacrificial apparatus of the Old Testament when placed in comparison with the sacrifice of Christ.

The doctrine, moreover, is too defined and emphatic to be explained by that mysterious sentiment, seemingly coeval with our race, that bloodshed is the medium most proper for communication between God and His offending offspring ; the sentiment so pathetically treated by Schiller in the “*Eleusische fest.*”

In fact this doctrine is specific to Christianity ; it is integral to the New Testament, and is distinctive of it. Shadowed forth by the Levitical ritual ; attested by the indigenous religions of the world, sometimes in gross, sometimes in ferocious, always in tragic imitations, the “doctrine of the precious blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1.) was proclaimed by His apostles with an energy and an unanimity, which prove that it was practically original. The eternal value of this was declared by them with all the more intensity, because they all denied that

“the blood of bulls and of goats had any power to take away sins.”—(Hebrews x.)

The true origin of the doctrine is to be found in three events in the life of Our Lord. The first was His teaching in

the synagogue at Capernaum preserved in the sixth chapter of St. John. The second was the institution of the Eucharist. The third was the effusion of blood and water from His sacred side after His death upon the Cross.

Thus the doctrine of the blood of Jesus took its rise in the teaching and the facts of Our Lord's life itself; and possessed from the outset a spiritual, a sacramental, and an historical importance.

The Lord Himself connected His blood with the saving and the nourishing of souls. It was none other than He who associated the Lord's Supper in one of its two elements with the efficacy of His own blood. His favourite disciple mentioned the shedding of His blood as one of the proofs of His Lord's perfect humanity.

To-day the detractors of this glorious article are a negligible fraction, and if the Church is strong to-day in her conflict with sin and misery, a preponderant measure of that strength is due to the degree of faithfulness with which the doctrine of the precious blood of Christ has been maintained.

Offence has sometimes been taken, and I think justly taken, at the language of popular preachers when speaking on this topic. I have no wish to excuse their aberrations, nor to minimise the mischief which sensuous extravagances have done.

Such preachers are bound to imitate the language of the New Testament, in its decorum, its simplicity, its grave restraint. Sermons, hymns, and tracts ought never to transgress against these inspired qualities. A theme so immeasurably sacred, and so perilously sweet, should be treated only as the sacred writers treat it.

To talk about "the blood" is contrary to the manner and the spirit of the New Testament. The term occurs once only in the New Testament*; and strictly considered, not even once.

The invariable use of the sacred writers is to define the blood by some explanatory word. "The blood of Christ," "the blood of Jesus," "His blood," "the blood of sprinkling," "the blood of the everlasting covenant," "Thy blood," "His blood."

While we may never relax the stress with which we maintain with the whole New Testament that between the blood of Jesus and the forgiveness of sins there is an association that cannot be dissolved, we must always assert that association, as the New Testament asserts it, with a divine sobriety and beautiful good taste.

* See St. John, 1st Epistle, Chap. V.

DISCUSSION.

In a spoken address of great eloquence, Mr. MARSTON introduced some details which were not included in the printed paper, and at the request of the CHAIRMAN, in which the meeting heartily joined, Mr. MARSTON added later the following section :—

I have thus stated the Christian Doctrine of Atonement in a light which seems to make that doctrine appear to be incomparable, indispensable, and completely moral. It remains for me to notice four objections alleged against all theories of Atonement ; and therefore, of course, against the Christian doctrine.

The first objection is that alleged by some students of Comparative Religion. The second is alleged by those who maintain that repentance is sufficient to secure the complacency of God towards the sinner. The third is alleged by those who say that the Doctrine of Atonement offends the Moral Sense. The fourth is alleged by some disciples of Evolution, who say that there is no such thing in reality as a sense of sin, and therefore there is no such thing in reality as the need of atonement.

The Comparative Religionist pronounces the Doctrine of Atonement to be mythical; the advocate of Repentance pronounces it to be superfluous; the stickler for the Moral Sense pronounces it to be immoral; the votary of Evolution pronounces it to be obsolete. I will briefly reply to each objector.

1. The objection alleged from Comparative Religion I meet in this way. There are no doubt many tokens and guesses at Atonement scattered throughout history, human sacrifices, scapegoats, banquets of flesh and blood, and many grotesque and horrible ceremonies can be collected in illustration of Atonement, but at best, these are rude adumbrations of the Cross of Christ. Even the Old Testament sacrifices are called by the Apostle to the Hebrews a mere shadow of the things to come. But between the Cross of Christ in its definite historical power, and its moral majesty, and the quaint or painful examples of Atonement put forth by Comparative Religion, there is so deep and wide a gulf that any true comparison is out of place; at least it must be allowed that all such comparisons prove Christianity to be the superlative religion.

2. The objector who says that Repentance is sufficient to secure forgiveness may be answered thus. Is there anything

in the nature of repentance, to compel forgiveness? If God requires repentance, which is in itself a process full of deep and acute inward pain, why may He not also require a real sacrifice, a bearing of penalty, before He can effectually forgive. In this light, atonement becomes the crown of repentance.

3. The objector who says that the Doctrine of Atonement is immoral, I have already referred to; but I would here submit to him the following questions. Why is it immoral in God to be displeased with Sin? Why is it immoral in God to forgive Sin? Why is it immoral in God to make the most generous terms with the Sinner? Why is it immoral in God to accept the loving and willing self-sacrifice of His Son in order to accomplish whatever may be necessary to complete the mystery of redemption?

4. To the objector from the side of Evolution, I would reply with all deference due from one, who knows very little about biology, as follows: The sense of sin seems to be inextricably intertwined in human nature; it is certainly not confined to the brutal or degraded; for example, it permeates the Attic Drama, which must be taken as the highest expression of human thought and feeling, outside Revelation. By the sense of sin, I do not mean a sense of conflict, successful or unsuccessful, with lower appetites or lower forms of life; it is something quite different from the scars of humanity in its victorious ascent. It is properly expressed by the royal penitent in the words, "Against Thee only have I sinned"; "Lo, Thou requirest truth in the inward parts."

It is again expressed by the Apostle Paul, in the words "The good, that I would, I do not," "the evil, that I would not, that I do." This sense of sin is, I maintain, chronic; and can only be eradicated by a believing enjoyment of the Christian Doctrine of Atonement.

The CHAIRMAN in conveying to the lecturer the thanks of the Meeting, said it was a happy idea on Mr. Marston's part to lay aside his printed paper and to give the Meeting an exposition of his subject in the lucid and eloquent speech to which they had listened with so much pleasure.

Mr. M. L. ROUSE thought that an inherent idea in sacrifice was the purity of the victim; hence, in a passage quoted from Virgil by Mr. Marston, it was a virgin that had been slain to appease the wrath of the gods. Where did the heathen get the idea of propitiatory sacrifice through the offering of the life of an innocent

animal? Would it have occurred to them naturally that the Creator would be pleased with their burning to Him, in part or in whole, one of the creatures that He had made? Must they not have learnt it by tradition from our common ancestor, Noah? It should be remembered that in the Babylonian account of the Flood, as in the account in the Bible, stress was laid on the offering up of sacrifice as soon as the Flood was over. Probably Noah had received the tradition from Adam who had been taught of God in this matter.

Rev. E. SEELEY said: I do not rise to criticise as I agree with nearly all that Mr. Marston has now set before us whether by printed or spoken word.

“Christ died for our sins”; a “Propitiation for our sins for the whole world.”

“God . . . gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

“The Blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

These scripture truths I fully accept. But, “the Christian Doctrine of Atonement” includes more, and the fuller revelation makes the Gospel more intelligible:—more evidently “the wisdom of God.” 1 Cor. i, 23, 24.

Let Scripture be our sole basis, and let us start with the first revelation of God's Gospel. Gen. iii, 15, “It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” This implies victory through suffering, a victory of conquest of the Evil one, and of deliverance of the enslaved. The New Testament tells us in clearer language of the Saviour “becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the Cross.” “Wherefore also God highly exalted Him, etc.” (Phil. ii, 8, 9). Christ came as the God-given Lamb of Sacrifice. But the typical sacrifices were NOT CRUCIFIED. Why was Christ crucified? With the last quoted text compare Rom. v, 18, 19 “As through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One shall the many be made righteous.”

That “one act of righteousness” was the “obedience even unto death, yea, the death of the Cross.” The perfect victory over extremest temptation was “well-pleasing” to God and effected

Atonement, and the Reconciliation included Redemption ; as stated in Heb. ix, 12 " by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption."

The absolute perfection of Christ's sacrifice of Himself in entire devotion to God through life and death was the " one act of righteousness " that " much more " than atoned for the former " one trespass " and also for our abounding sins, and therefore " where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly ; that as sin reigned in death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord " (*see Rom. v, 17-21*).

So we see that Christ's tremendous victory was also the Atoning Act that pleased God, and it procured for the Reconciler the throne of grace and glory, and also the New Covenant of grace for mankind ; and by that Covenant He assures grace and glory to all who accept His salvation, and trust in Him.

The Rev. JOHN TUCKWELL said that we could not add to that which God had Himself told us about the Atonement. He did not see that there was any force in the objection that had sometimes been made to the use of what had been spoken of as the " commercial terms " in which the Doctrine of Atonement had been expressed. The Scriptures themselves spoke of " buying the truth," and similar terms were in ordinary usage amongst ourselves ; thus we would say of a man who had ruined his health by overstudy that " he paid a heavy price for his knowledge," but here there was no question of anyone receiving that price. There was one view of the question which should not be overlooked. God was not only our Heavenly Father, full of mercy and love ; He was also the Moral Governor of the universe, who could not look upon sin with the least degree of allowance. Light thoughts of Atonement generally went with a light estimation of sin. We can form no ideas of our own as to how it was possible for a just God to receive sinners back into favour ; He Himself must tell us ; the plan must be His entirely ; and His plan was seen in the sacrifice of the Incarnate Son of God.

Mr. J. SCHWARTZ, Junr., read quotations from the writings of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Mr. W. H. Mallock, Dr. E. B. Tylor, the Rev. George Henslow, and Sir Oliver Lodge to show that these writers were not in accord with Mr. Marston on the

question of Atonement, and he held that the doctrine of the "Blood" did not appeal to the majority of the educated laity of the XXth century.

The Rév. A. COCHRANE said: If it be true as the last speaker said in his quotation from Sir A. Conan Doyle, that the rising generation has largely outgrown the Doctrine of the Atonement, he could only say that he was very sorry for the rising generation. As for Sir Oliver Lodge, and others like him, the language they used only revealed their great ignorance of the real teaching of the Bible. The questions that lie behind the statement, "the Incarnate Son incurred the entire liability of the race that He came to redeem" (p. 48), are "Why did the Son take upon Himself the liability of the race," and "How could He do it"? The Apostle St. Paul in Col. i, speaks of Him not only as "the First-born from the dead," but also as "the First-born of all creation." In verse 16, we read in the Authorized Version "by Him all things were created," but in the Greek and in the Revised Version, it is "in Him." This passage in the Epistle deals with a wider subject than the reconciliation of the human race alone. It speaks of the reconciliation of all creation. The Son was the original Head of all things, and before the fall of man, He formed a real link between God and the human race. After the fall, He followed that race, to which He was so closely linked, into its fallen condition, so that He might redeem it, and bring it back to God. It was as the original Head of man that Christ incurred and took upon Himself the burden of man's sin. The great questions were not so much that of Atonement, as "Who made the Atonement?" and "What is His relationship to the human race?"

The Rev. F. B. JOHNSTON said that Mr. Schwartz had quoted from a number of writers, and claimed that the majority of educated men at the present time was on his side. Truth has always been held by the minority of men; the carnal mind kicks at the Doctrine of the Atonement.

The Rev. F. CECIL LOVELY, rose to protest against the attitude Mr. Schwartz habitually took in putting forth views that were diametrically opposed to the constitutions of the Victoria Institute. Mr. Schwartz did not appear to have any desire to investigate Philosophical and Scientific questions of truth; but only to assert opinions, which were often offensive to those whose belief was

“based upon faith in the existence of one Eternal God, who, in His wisdom created all things very good.”

Prof. LANGHORNE ORCHARD thought there could be no question as to the truth that “a profound and inviolable association linked the forgiveness of their sins with the shedding of the blood of Jesus” (p. 49).

The value of the Paper—good as it is—would, however, have been enhanced had the author carefully explained the meaning of “sin” and the meaning of “The Blood of Christ.” St. John tells us that “sin is lawlessness.” It is insubjectivity of will to the law of God. The proper penalty of sin is forfeiture of life, as stated in the declarations—“The soul that sinneth it shall die,” “The wages of sin is death,” “Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” By his sin, man has forfeited his life. The penalty must be met, either by the sinner himself, or, if he is to be saved, by another—on his behalf. Thus, salvation involves the vicarious principle, and is impossible otherwise. . . . “The Blood of Christ” is His *life poured out* upon the Cross, that we might live (cf. Lev. xvii, 11, 14, and St. John x, 10).

The CHAIRMAN in closing the meeting said that he thought the Institute owed a debt of gratitude to Mr. Schwartz for he showed the “leanness of the land” possessed by merely negative teaching.

Mr. Marston had already left, but the meeting indicated very plainly its gratitude for the impressive address he had delivered on a subject of profound importance.

SUBSEQUENT COMMUNICATIONS.

Sir ROBERT ANDERSON: To gain clear thoughts on this subject we do well to define the word “Atonement.” As Archbishop Trench tells us in his *Synonyms*, “When our translation (of the Bible) was made it signified, as innumerable examples prove, reconciliation, or the making up of a foregoing enmity; all its uses in our early literature justifying the etymology, now sometimes called in question, that ‘atone-ment’ is at-one-ment.”

No one, indeed, who will study the passages in which the Hebrew word occurs which our translators usually render “to make atonement” can fail to see that under the divine law the at-one-ment was not the sacrifice itself, but a result of sacrifice, depending on the

work of priesthood. And in keeping with this, *ιλάσκομαι* is used in Heb. ii, 17, with reference to the Lord's present and continuing work for His people, as High Priest.

Now, however, the word has come to be accepted as equivalent to "propitiatory sacrifice." And in this sense, not only is atonement, as Mr. Marston says, older than Christianity, it is older than Judaism. For Abel offered a propitiatory sacrifice. And the record gives proof that he did so in pursuance of a preceding revelation; for it was not by higher intelligence, but *by faith* that he offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain. The universality of sacrifice (and it is found among all the savage races of the world) can only be accounted for by a tradition based on a primeval revelation. For no rational being could evolve from his own brain the idea that by killing a fellow creature he would appease God. Its universality, moreover, gives proof that human nature instinctively responds to the Divine demand for a propitiatory sacrifice. And the infidel must account for this before we can give a hearing to his attacks on the Scriptural truth of the Atonement.

The Rev. Chancellor LIAS: The Christian Creed is a collection, not of dogmas, but of *facts*. It does not, in the first instance, that is, consist of propositions drawn up on paper and accepted by the mind (though these may result from it), but of fundamental facts believed by the heart, and realized by the conscience. The controversies which for centuries have desolated Christianity have not been on the facts of the Divine Order, presented in the Creed, but on the *explanations* of those facts which various schools of theology have given of such questions, as the Presence in the Eucharist; the fact of Inspiration; the necessity of an Episcopal government of local churches. So on the question of Atonement, explanations have found acceptance which had the merit of simplicity, rather than that of duly estimating all the various conditions of a very complex problem. The great Father Origen has been credited with the theory that the price of our redemption was paid to the Devil; it is a matter of fact that he did deliver himself of such an *obiter dictum*, as of many other like suggestions. But his reasoned conclusion was that the mode of Christ's Atonement involved a host of considerations, some lying on the very surface, but some of immense complexity and difficulty. There can be no harm whatever in endeavouring to find reasonable explanations of a

Divine Mystery. But there has been, and unfortunately there is still, a tendency to represent human explanations of Divine facts as the only ones possible, and to insist on the whole Christian Church accepting them as a condition of salvation.

The Rev. Dr. IRVING: The mention of McLeod Campbell might have suggested the desirability of a short critical analysis of his book, *The Nature of the Atonement*. No one work has perhaps done more, if so much, in the last half-century to lift the minds of students of theology above the low, carnal, and materialistic notions of "sacrifice" found in pagan cults, and even in the Hebrew religion in its decadence.

The New Testament certainly lifts the idea to that higher plane of thought everywhere, as the author contends. With St. Paul, "Christ crucified" is "the wisdom of God in a mystery," to be experimentally unfolded in the sacramental life of the Church. St. Peter tells us that "Christ suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God"; and this is in harmony with the Pauline idea of "reconciliation." With St. John the contextual setting of the "propitiation" lifts it altogether above the mere carnal elements of "sacrifice" to a revelation of the love of God, calling to a life of Sonship; and with the author of the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, chap. x (Ep. for Good Friday), it is essentially the perfect surrender of a perfect will; a perfect response to the mind of God towards sin, revealing to man, at the same time, his own dire spiritual needs, while it awakens resentment in the carnal mind of the unregenerate man (*cf.* p. 47).

As the freedom from condemnation enables the spirit of the believer to "walk after the spirit," according to the law of the spirit of the life "in Christ Jesus"; as "the blood of Christ purges the conscience from dead works," (ix, 14) and sets free all the powers of the soul "to serve the living God," it is seen (in the light of Christian experience) that "A moral and spiritual atonement stands in direct relation to a moral and spiritual salvation, Christ giving Himself for our sins to our having in Him the life of Sonship."

Mr. WM. WOODS SMYTH: Apart from modern science we have no rational interpretation of the Atonement. Mr. Marston confesses that he offers no theory of the Atonement. In this he is supported by the following high authorities. The Hon. and Rev. Arthur Lyttelton in *Lux Mundi* says: "The central mystery of the Cross

. . . . remains a mystery and must always be an insuperable difficulty to those who depend on reason." The Bishop of Oxford (Dr. Gore) takes a similar position. The late Professor James Orr puts the question very clearly: "The difficulty does not lie in the innocent suffering for the guilty; this is common. And the world is full of substitutionary, of vicarious, of voluntary suffering endured for the sake of others." But, he continues, "suffering for another's sins has of itself no expiatory character. It is an *aggravation* of the sin, not an atonement for it If going further we press the question of *how* Christ in this way bore our sins,—what made His endurance of suffering and death an atonement for sin—we have to confess ourselves in the presence of a mystery on which only partial light is available." Now to darken with mystery a central truth for man's salvation is for our race a terrible calamity.

Turn now to the full light of modern science, in which we are instructed that man was created by a great ministry of Natural Law in which animal sacrifice was the predominant factor. "Sacrifice" is the word used by Herbert Spencer in this connection. And in a brief sentence he unconsciously overturns all opposition to the Atonement when he says: "The benefit accruing to the race from these sacrifices is the sanction for the sacrifice."

Now in the light of modern science the fall of man takes on dimensions far beyond anything hitherto thought of; because he fell from the awful eminence it took millions of years to reach. But, inasmuch, as he climbed to this high eminence through a stupendous ministry of animal sacrifice it is manifestly most rational that he should be restored again by a great ministry of sacrifice; first in type in the ceremonial Law, and then in reality in the Cross of Christ.

Lt.-Col. M. A. ALVES, R.E.: If we stick to Scripture, and jettison tradition, we shall see that man by nature has a spirit of life the same in substance, if we may use this word, as that of lower animate creation. We shall see also that destruction, not everlasting conscious existence, is the lot of this "soul," as it is sometimes called.

The Christian Doctrine of the Atonement appears to be fully revealed for the first time in St. John's Gospel, where a glorious and endless future life is promised to true believers as an assured present certainty—the doctrine of the Resurrection, in fact. The burnt-

offering seems to foreshadow this, the skin of any man's burnt-offering becoming the priest's who offered it; compare Gen. iii, 21, and Lev. vii, 8. This is the best denied doctrine of Christendom.

So much for general remarks.

That (*see* page 43, clause 4) "the Atonement is prior to Christianity and wider than the Bible" is, I think, unquestionable.

There are allusions in the book of Genesis to sacrifices and other ordinances; and the descendants of Noah must have carried away with them traditions which they either lost by neglect or corrupted; for I do not think that natural human ingenuity would ever have discovered the doctrine of vicarious sacrifice.

The reader (*see* page 45, clause 1), rightly says that "exegesis is the key to theology"; but (*see* page 45, clause 3) when he says "the New Testament ought to have the first and the last word in this, as in all religious enquiry, etc.," I must demur.

Old and New Testaments have one author, God the Holy Spirit; and, until we have studied the Old, we cannot properly understand the New. Further, the Old Testament was our Lord's and the Apostles' only Bible; its grammatical and idiomatic construction are more in accordance with man's linguistic instincts than those of Greek, and many of its idiomatic forms are, to coin a word, "transverbated" into the New Testament Greek. Learned expositors, ignoring this last fact, have been led into writing hopeless jargon.

In connection with this (*see* page 45, last line) is a reference to "the stability of the laws of language, and especially of the Greek language." What are these laws? The Greek, and all other languages but one, began at Babel, the seat of confusion, and different languages have different laws. Chinese and Greek are antipodean to each other in construction.

In the same paragraph (on page 46) it is suggested that "the books of the New Testament should be studied with the grammar in our hand." I suggest that for the words "the grammar" should be substituted "a phrase-book of Hebrew idioms," which are, I believe, much nearer the instincts of human expression of thought than the elaborate and interminable inflections of Greek.

I cannot go with the writer when he says (*see* page 48, clause 4) "thus is effected an actual release from the habits and even from the impulses of sin." It is important for a Christian to know what

the New Begetting is, and what it is not. That the Gospel gives a desire and a power to fight habits and restrain impulses is true; but many devout Christians have found long established evil habits very hard indeed to cast off. This teaching seems to me to tend towards "sinless perfection." The Apostle Paul does not seem to have been freed from the impulses of sin; nor Peter, when Paul withstood him to the face at Antioch. Such teaching would tend, in my judgment, to cause arrogance in the strong, and undue depression in the weak.

The key to the Atonement, or rather to its need, seems to me to be found in Jeremiah xviii, *re* the potter's house; first creation a failure, the heavens included; the second a success. For us men, a new and Divine Spirit of Life to take, in the Resurrection, the place of the old spirit of life (dropped at death); a spirit which, though a separate creation, we hold in common with the lower animate—and perhaps inanimate—creation. For evidence of this, see in a Concordance the various uses of the words '*N-shāmāh*' and '*Rūāch*' in the Old Testament. This seems to me to be Bible teaching for Christians.

I close with repeating my thanks to Mr. Marston with whom I doubtless agree much more than I disagree.

Mr. Edward J. G. TITTERINGTON, M.A.: Mr. Marston remarks (page 50) that a preponderant measure of the strength of the Church must be ascribed to the faithfulness with which the doctrine of the precious blood of Christ has been maintained. It would have been interesting if we could have heard a testimony from some present, whether, in their wide experience, as well as in history, Christian work is not fruitful, and honoured of God, largely in proportion as the doctrine is faithfully proclaimed. This, in fact, is the true answer to one speaker, who asked whether, if it were presented to us for the first time when we had arrived at years of maturity, we should not have rejected it as preposterous. "For the preaching of the Cross is to them that are perishing (Grk.) foolishness; but unto us which are being saved it is the power of God."

One was glad to hear the emphasis placed during the discussion upon what may be termed the wider aspects of the reconciliation effected in Christ Jesus—both as regards His own glory, and as regards the creation as a whole. These are aspects which receive comparatively little attention, but are none the less of first

importance. In addition to Col. i, may one be permitted to refer to Rom. viii, 18-23, and to numerous passages in Eph., Rev., etc.; even, one might say, to Gen. i?

Are we not, in fact, tempted often to ignore even what Calvary means to ourselves? Every good gift of God is on account of that. "Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive: Thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also." Even the fact that we can approach God in prayer and communion springs from this: we have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh."

One speaker dealt very clearly with the distinction between the Christian Doctrine of Atonement and the idea underlying heathen sacrifice. Can we not sum up the distinction by saying that heathen sacrifice is based on the assumption that we are able to offer God something which is pleasing unto Him; Christian sacrifice (by which I mean the sacrifice of Calvary, together with all ritual sacrifice prefiguring this, from the time of Abel onwards) is based on the recognition that this is not so. The one springs from that central doctrine of heathenism, salvation by works, or merit; the other embodies the doctrine of salvation by faith in the finished work of Christ, and by that alone.