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THE OLD TESTAMENT
CONCEPTION OF ATONEMENT
FULFILLED BY CHRIST

WITH A CRITICISM OF DR. RASHDALL'S
HAMPTON LECTURES

A SERMON PREACHED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
ON JUNE 15, 1920

BY

THE REV. PROFESSOR C. F. BURNLEY, D.LITT.

HUMPHREY MILFORD

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Journal of Theological Studies

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St. Luke xxiv. 25-27.

And He said unto them, O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

vv. 44-48.

And He said unto them, These are My words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, how that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the Law of Moses, and the Prophets, and the Psalms, concerning Me. Then opened He their mind, that they might understand the Scriptures; and He said unto them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. Ye are witnesses of these things.

Rm

I WANT this morning to plead for a closer synthesis of Old Testament learning with the study of the New Testament. Looking, as an Old Testament student, at the problems so keenly debated among New Testament scholars, many of which stand in vital connexion with the fundamental facts of our Religion, it is impossible not to feel that on some of these at least a clearer light might be thrown if they were seriously approached by more scholars possessing a first-hand linguistic knowledge of Hebrew and Aramaic, and of the literature to which these languages furnish the key.

This is a contention so obvious as to amount to a truism. Our Lord and His first followers, those whom He taught and with whom He reasoned and argued, were *Jews*; their Bible was the Hebrew Old Testament, their language, to

a large extent, Aramaic. Some part, at any rate, of the Gospel-records is based upon an Aramaic original. The whole New Testament teems with Old Testament quotations and allusions—some of them drawn directly from the Hebrew text, others based upon the Septuagint translation of it; and for explanation of the Septuagint variants a first-hand knowledge of Hebrew is essential. The religious terminology of the New Testament, when based on the Old Testament or on extra-canonical Jewish literature, not infrequently turns upon some question of Semitic philology or usage. All these facts, and others like them, are among the commonplaces of every beginner at New Testament study. It may seem superfluous to mention them in this place. Yet do they not, when taken as a whole, amount to a strong argument upon which to base the plea that we need more New Testament scholars who will approach their subject with a first-hand Semitic equipment?

I trust that I may not be misunderstood. It is far from my intention to attempt, in a spirit of arrogance, to teach New Testament scholars their business; still less to suggest that the Semitic scholar holds the only clue to New Testament interpretation, or that New Testament scholars not similarly learned are altogether incapable of appreciating the value of this clue when it is placed in their hands, or of turning it to great advantage. Indeed, it is part of my case that the Old Testament scholar on his side most frequently suffers from serious limitations in learning which prevent him from making the best use of his special knowledge in application to the New Testament. At any rate, I am keenly conscious that this is so with myself. Yet it is surely a fact that Biblical scholars live too much in water-tight compartments. If the New Testament scholar, however highly endowed he be with intellectual gifts, is obliged to depend upon second-hand information in a wide department of learning which has a direct—and indeed a vital—bearing on his subject, he may indeed gain much which he is able to turn to good account; yet surely

the result is not likely to equal that which might have been attained had he drawn at first-hand from this fount of knowledge, and had habitually contemplated his subject of study in the light of an original acquaintance with its antecedents. If we are to be good stewards of the mysteries of God, bringing forth out of our treasury things both new and old, there is no department of that treasure-house which we can afford to leave unransacked. We shall not hand over the examination of its lowest and darkest store-houses to dependants, who through indolence, or ignorance of our special needs, may overlook the very object which we require; but, so far as time and strength allow, we shall descend ourselves and bring everything up to the light of day, in order that, having so done, we may have an accurate first-hand knowledge of our resources.

This represents the gist of my plea in emphasis of the great need for the raising up and encouragement of more scholars of the kind that, possessing a thorough equipment in Old Testament and Semitic studies, shall devote their main energies to investigating the bearing of these studies upon the problems of the New Testament.

When an Old Testament scholar thinks of the kind of New Testament problems which might conceivably receive fuller elucidation through the more direct application to them of Semitic learning, a number seem at once to pass before his mind. Can we, in the light of modern critical investigation, define with any clearness the sense in which Old Testament prophecy pointed forward to our Lord and was fulfilled by Him, or are we only warranted in expressing ourselves in vague generalities? Can we distinguish between our Lord's claim to fulfil prophecy, and possibly later accretions to the Gospel-narrative which depend merely upon the conviction of early writers that He *had* fulfilled it? What is the true relation of Old Testament sacrificial conceptions to the New Testament doctrine of Atonement? Is the theory of Hellenistic influence upon the writer of the Fourth Gospel justified to the extent to which it is now

commonly received; or does it involve some amount of ignorance as to the Hebrew side of the conception of the Word or Wisdom of God? How comes it that a scholar like Dr. Moffatt, in the imposing bibliography purporting to include all work of any moment on the authorship of the Fourth Gospel which he gives us in his *Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament*, omits all mention of a contribution which, from the Semitic scholar's point of view, is so extraordinarily weighty as Bishop Lightfoot's essays on the internal evidence for authenticity? If the author of the Fourth Gospel was a Hellenistic Jew, why does he prefer to quote the Old Testament from the Hebrew rather than from the Septuagint, and constantly phrase his sentences like a man who is accustomed to think and speak in a Semitic language? If he was a Hellenistic Jew, how do we account for his minute and accurate knowledge of Palestinian topography, of Jewish customs, and above all of Messianic ideas and expectations in the time of our Lord? Is it altogether beyond the range of possibility that in the future a competent Semitic scholar may arise, who, examining the Fourth Gospel verse by verse, shall prove beyond the range of reasonable doubt that at any rate a part of it is actually based upon an Aramaic original?

Such are some of the questions which occur to the mind in regard to problems which may well be susceptible of considerable elucidation through the direct application of Semitic learning. It was originally my purpose to survey the field of study in a somewhat general way by taking a number of these questions and seeking briefly to indicate some of the lines along which they might profitably be handled from the Semitic standpoint. Circumstances have, however, led me to modify my plan, and to confine my remarks to a single question which, in view of its vital importance to all Christians, causes the other questions which I have mentioned to pale to comparative insignificance. I refer to our Lord's conviction that He was

fulfilling, through His Incarnation, Passion, and Resurrection, the rôle of the Suffering Servant as depicted in the latter half of the Book of Isaiah, and the conception of Atonement for sin which is therewith bound up.

For an adequate study of the sense in which our Lord fulfilled Old Testament prophecy there is more than one preliminary question which calls for discussion; though I think that for our present purpose these need not detain us long. There is, firstly, the question what was the true character of the predictive element in prophecy. Owing to the flood of light which has been thrown upon the Old Testament through critical study, the fact that the prophets had primarily a message to their own age, that their warnings and promises were dictated by the moral and social conditions by which they were immediately surrounded, and that they were characteristically preachers of righteousness, came home to Old Testament scholars almost in the light of a discovery. The fact is so arresting, it shows Old Testament prophecy in so much more real and vital connexion with religion than did the older uncritical conception, which viewed it mainly as a collection of proof-texts bearing on the New Testament, that it has come to be regarded as representing the main, if not the sole, function of prophecy. If, as I have often done, I set a question to ordination-candidates bearing on the character of Old Testament prophecy, the great majority of answers begin with some form of the statement that the prophets were *forth-tellers* rather than *fore-tellers*. This modern view of prophecy, does not, it is true, deny that our Lord fulfilled the religious ideals which were the creation of prophetic thought; but it *does tend* to ignore—if not to deny—the theory of an ecstatic and mysterious prevision of the future which is outside the range of ordinary experience, and the existence of which may therefore be called in question.

Yet the view that the main function—or at any rate the decisive mark—of a genuine prophet is the gift of predicting future events is again and again put forward in the Old

Testament. It will be sufficient now to refer to the well-known passage in Deuteronomy, in which prediction of an event which does *not* come to pass is cited as the mark of a prophet who has spoken presumptuously, i. e. not under the influence of Divine inspiration;¹ and to the trial of strength between Yahweh and the heathen gods so vividly pictured by Deutero-Isaiah, where ability to forecast the future—triumphantly proved in the case of the true God through the fulfilled prediction of the raising up of Cyrus as a conqueror and coming deliverer—is made the test-question.²

It is tempting to pursue this subject further, but time would fail me; and for our present purpose recognition of the general fulfilment by our Lord of the prophetic ideals is really sufficient. It may be remarked, however, that the *conscious* fulfilment by our Lord of Old Testament prophecy, to which I shall presently refer, has a very direct bearing on the subject. He being what He was, the fact (if it can be proved to be such) that He was vividly conscious of a correspondence between His life and mission and the ideals of the prophets which He must so constantly and earnestly have studied, is surely the weightiest fact that could be advanced in proof that there was something more behind these ideals than mere vague generalization.

Another preliminary question concerns the sifting of the Gospel-evidence, with a view to discriminating passages which illustrate our Lord's own consciousness that He was fulfilling Old Testament prophecy from another and later type of passage, in which the conviction of early Judaic Christianity that He was the expected Messiah, and had fulfilled in the fullest sense the spiritual aspirations of the Old Testament, seems to have led to the ascription to Him of the fulfilment of particular passages of the Old Testament in a sense which, in the light of our modern knowledge, appears artificial and inappropriate. The fact

¹ Deut. 18²¹⁻²².

² Isa. 41¹⁻⁴, 21²⁹, 42⁹, 44⁶⁻⁸, 45^{20, 21}, 46⁹⁻¹¹, 48^{3-8, 14-16}.

is familiar that the most outstanding illustrations of this tendency are to be found in the latest editorial stratum of the First Gospel; but it can hardly be doubted that further illustrations are to be traced in other parts of the Gospel-narratives. This question, however, highly important as it is, does not appear to block the approach to our present inquiry. There is more than sufficient evidence in the oldest and most authentic Gospel-sources to prove that our Lord claimed to fulfil the ideals of Old Testament prophecy, and in particular the ideal conception of the Suffering Servant with which we are at present concerned.

We may pass on, then, to brief consideration of this conception, and our Lord's interpretation of it.

The great conception of the ideal Servant of Yahweh belongs to Isa. 40-55, a section of the Book of Isaiah which is proved by internal evidence to be not the work of the pre-exilic prophet of the eighth century B. C., but of a later and still greater prophet whose date can be fixed within clearly-defined limits in the later period of the Exile. As we are ignorant of his name, it is usual to refer to him as Deutero-Isaiah. He pictures his people Israel as the Servant of Yahweh, shortly to be released from exile in order to perform a mission of evangelization to the world at large. He cannot, however, overlook the fact that the nation as a whole is morally unfit for so lofty a spiritual mission. The Servant is blind and deaf to his vocation. 'Seeing many things, he regards not; his ears are open, but he hears not.' Thus the conception comes to be narrowed down. It is the Israel within Israel who is the righteous Servant—the spiritually-minded nucleus within the nation upon which the religious ideals of the prophet depend for realization—and this Israel, pictured as an ideal personage, has a preliminary mission to his own nation prior to his performance of his mission to humanity as a whole. The grand culmination is, however, never for an instant lost sight of by the prophet. Finally, in his

conviction that God's spiritual purposes for humanity are not to be defeated, and that Israel must eventually rise to his high vocation, he seems to revert to his original conception, and it is once more the nation as a whole which is the ideal Servant, carrying out, for the world at large, a great work of redemption.

Let us briefly review the later stages of this wonderful conception. The mission entrusted to the Servant can only be accomplished through much suffering. His contemporaries fail to understand his steadfast purpose; he is greeted, not with enthusiasm, but with scorn and loathing. None like him has ever understood what sorrow means. He experiences to the full the sharp pain of isolation, the agony caused by the misinterpretation of the active sympathy which he has to proffer. Yet, in spite of all, he still persists. In the teeth of persecution he sets his face like a flint, for the Lord Yahweh is his helper, and he knows that he shall not be put to shame. Finally, in the pursuit of his aims, he voluntarily suffers a cruel death, allowing himself to be numbered with transgressors, and undergoing the death and burial of the worst of felons.

But it is through death that the purpose of his life is worked out. His death is a guilt-offering: his sufferings are vicarious. Yahweh has been pleased to smite him in order that his blood may become the seed of a renewed community. Thus he is pictured as rising again from the dead, and as gazing with satisfaction upon the result of his labours, knowing that, through his uttermost surrender, God's purpose has been accomplished to the full.

If it be asked wherein the peculiar virtue of the Servant's sufferings is pictured as consisting, there can be no doubt as to the answer. His whole career—both the life and the death—offers a sublime and unique exhibition of the bending of a human will to the fulfilment of God's purposes for humanity. This voluntary subjection of the will is emphasized in every description of the ideal Servant, and it explains the fact that he is well-pleasing to God as His

chosen instrument.¹ He possesses both the ear and the tongue of a disciple.² The extent to which performance of his mission will involve him in self-abasement and suffering culminating in death seems to be pictured as gradually unfolding before him; yet, as its full meaning dawns upon him, he never for an instant wavers in his submission to the Divine Will.³ In the final scene the voluntary character of his sufferings is emphasized with a force which is not always sufficiently reproduced in our English versions.⁴ The willing surrender of himself to death, which is but the culmination of a lifetime of self-sacrifice, is an issue in the full performance of his mission involved through the sins of humanity, and inevitable if he is to save humanity from the consequences of sin. Thus he is truly said to bear the sins of many and to interpose on behalf of transgressors. And since his whole life-work is but an interpretation and fulfilment of the Divine Will in regard to humanity, it is the fact that 'Yahweh caused to light upon him the guilt of us all'. That God should will to accept such a voluntary sacrifice of the innocent on behalf of the guilty does not, however, involve a defect in the conception of Divine justice. We do not arraign the Divine justice for permitting a soldier to lay down his life in regaining a position which has been lost through the fault of others; such an attitude is precluded both by our sense of the inherent moral value of the action as an offering of supreme heroism, and by our conviction that death is not the end, but that such a sacrifice must find its recompense in a life to come. This outcome of the ideal Servant's sacrifice is fully emphasized by the prophet in the closing verses of *ch.* 53.

There can be no doubt that the Servant of Yahweh, as he figures in the great and familiar passage which runs

¹ *Ch.* 42¹, 49².

² *Ch.* 50⁴.

³ *Ch.* 50⁵⁻⁶.

⁴ In *ch.* 53⁷⁻¹² the Niph'al forms נִצְנַח, נִמְנַח are undoubtedly instances of Niph'al *tolerativum*. We should render in *v.* 7, 'He was oppressed, yet *he* let himself be humbled' (submitted himself); in *v.* 12, 'and with transgressors he let himself be numbered'.

from Isa. 52¹³ to 53¹², represents primarily Israel as a nation, passing through the sufferings and vicissitudes of the Exile, and, as it were, emerging from the tomb at the restoration from captivity in order to become the instrument for the redemption of the world. The vivid colouring and wealth of details in the prophet's picture have, however, impressed Old Testament scholars of all types of opinion; and these characteristics have universally been regarded as demanding explanation. One attempt to explain them is that the prophet may have drawn his details from the actual experiences of a particular righteous sufferer for the Faith, such as was Jeremiah. To myself, however, as to many others, the boldness of the lines in which the Servant is depicted *as an individual* makes the conclusion wellnigh irresistible that it was already revealed to the prophet in some mysterious way that his conception was to find fulfilment in one great *Person*, the Redeemer of the world. It is indeed Israel who effects the world's redemption, but it is Israel with all his highest spiritual possibilities realized and consummated in a single individual.

The Jews of our Lord's day do not seem to have interpreted the conception of the Servant of Yahweh as having reference to a personal Redeemer who was to be identified with the Messiah. The Apostles' use, in the early chapters of Acts, of the term 'Servant' with reference to our Lord, in such phrases as 'God hath glorified His Servant Jesus', 'God, having raised up His Servant, hath sent Him to bless you',¹ makes it plain that they, in their enlightenment, were dwelling upon the Isaianic conception, and suggests the inference that the use of the term 'Servant' in a Messianic sense would not be misunderstood by their hearers; and a Messianic interpretation is given, from the Christian standpoint, to Isa. 53 by Philip, in explaining the chapter to the Ethiopian eunuch.² But how foreign the idea of a suffering *Messiah* was to the

¹ Acts 3¹³⁻²⁶; cp. 4³⁰.

² Acts 8²⁶⁻³⁵.

Jewish thought of the time is evident from the failure of our Lord's immediate followers to realize that their Master was destined to suffer, and that His crucifixion was anything else than the death-blow to their expectations. 'But we hoped that it was He who should redeem Israel', said Cleophas to the unknown wayfarer, when he had told him of the death of the prophet, Jesus of Nazareth; and he needed the reproof, 'Behoved it not the Messiah to suffer these things?' and the interpretation of Scripture which followed, before he was able to grasp the fact that this was in truth a great aspect of the Messiah's work, as contemplated in the Old Testament. In the same way we find St. Paul at Thessalonica 'opening and alleging' to the Jews 'from the Scriptures' 'that it behoved the Messiah to suffer, and to rise again from the dead', it being necessary to make them understand this before he was able to continue, 'This Jesus, whom I proclaim unto you, is the Messiah'.¹ Thus the evidence indicates that it was our Lord Himself who first realized the Messianic import of the 'Servant'-conception in Deutero-Isaiah, as destined to be fulfilled in Himself, and communicated that interpretation to His followers.

That our Lord was conscious, from an early stage in His ministry, that He was fulfilling the prophetic ideal of the Servant comes out perhaps most notably in the incident in the synagogue at Nazareth, recorded in St. Luke 4. It will be remembered that He selected and read the passage in Isa. 61 which begins with the words, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor'. This passage occurs in a group of chapters which are not the work of Deutero-Isaiah but of a later post-exilic prophet, who is, however, undoubtedly taking up and developing the earlier prophet's conception of the ideal Servant.

When our Lord had read the passage, He closed the book, and we are told that 'He began to say unto them,

¹ Acts 17¹⁻³.

To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears. And all bare Him witness, and wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of His mouth.' I do not know how this Lucan narrative is understood by those who hold that the Synoptic Gospels witness to the fact that our Lord concealed His Messianic claims in the earlier stages of His ministry, and in fact until just before His Passion; but it certainly appears from it that at a very early stage He was ready, before a suitable audience, to proclaim Himself Messiah in the sense in which He understood and assumed Messiahship, as opposed to the popular conception of a king who was to be a political leader and deliverer, which He repudiated at all stages of His ministry.

It is clear, however, from a number of allusions that it was not until shortly before His Passion that our Lord began to impress upon His disciples the fact that the great ideal which He was fulfilling involved, as its culmination, Suffering, Death, and Resurrection—a conception which, as we have already noticed, they so signally failed to understand. The most striking passage is one which comes from the Marcan source, and is found in St. Matthew's Gospel, though not in that of St. Luke. It is the saying which stands in connexion with the request of the sons of Zebedee for a pre-eminent position in the earthly kingdom which they supposed that He was about to found—'The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to live His life a ransom for many'.¹ This is an unquestionable allusion to the words of Isa. 53—'when his soul shall make a guilt-offering', and, 'by his knowledge shall my righteous Servant make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities'.

We come next to an incident in our Lord's life which, from the Old Testament point of view, is of peculiar interest. I have said that the conception of the ideal Servant was not in Jewish circles interpreted Messianically in our Lord's time; yet there is one passage—and one only—in the Old

¹ St. Mark 10⁴⁵ = St. Matt. 20²⁸.

Testament in which the attributes of the Servant appear to be combined with the figure of the King-Messiah. The passage comes in Zech. 9, in the latter half of the book which dates probably from the Greek period, i. e. subsequently to the overthrow of the Persian Empire by Alexander in 332 B. C. In this prophecy the Messianic King is pictured as returning in triumph to his capital. He appears, not as a warlike monarch, but as a Prince of Peace, 'saved' from his external foes, i. e. the recipient of victory at the hands of God, and 'lowly', i. e. humble in relation to God—submitting himself to Divine guidance, and wholly untouched by lust of worldly power. He rides upon an ass, the animal of peace, and not upon a horse, which would suggest war and worldly aggrandizement. In the attribute of lowliness we may trace the combination of the conception of the Servant of Yahweh with the older ideal of the Messianic King. This no doubt was the reason why our Lord made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem in a manner which was calculated to bring the prophecy to the minds of His spectators.¹ It was a consciously-enacted fulfilment. The time had come for Him to claim His Messianic Kingdom—a Kingdom not of this world. The crowd at once recognized the resemblance of the action to the prophecy, and hailed its fulfilment. But they totally missed the connexion of the prophecy with the conception of the lowly Servant of Yahweh.

One more instance of consciously-enacted fulfilment of the Servant-prophecies may be noticed. If the points which I have already attempted to make can be accepted, it is surely not fanciful to see, in our Lord's trial-scene, when, both before the high priest and before Pilate, He maintained silence in face of His accusers and in face of the questions which were put to Him, a conscious and deliberate fulfilment of the passage in Isa. 53—'He was oppressed, yet he submitted himself and opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before her

¹ St. Mark 11¹⁻¹¹, St. Matt. 21¹⁻¹¹, St. Luke 19²⁹⁻⁴⁰, St. John 12¹²⁻¹⁹.

shearers is dumb; yea, he opened not his mouth'. This last instance, it will be noted, carries conscious fulfilment of the Servant-conception right up to the scene in which the ideal figure is depicted as willingly making His life a guilt-offering, and bearing the iniquities of many. It is appropriate, therefore, that the whole cycle of conscious fulfilment should be crowned and as it were rounded off by our Lord's question to the two disciples after His Resurrection: 'Behoved it not the Messiah to suffer these things, and to enter into His glory?'

It will already have become apparent to some at least of my hearers that I have chosen this subject in view of the theory of Atonement put forward by Dr. Rashdall in his *Bampton Lectures*. • Dr. Rashdall will have nothing of any objective theory of Atonement. The view, which we find throughout the New Testament, that the death of Christ effected Atonement for sin is altogether repugnant to him. Our Lord's mission, he holds, was simply to preach repentance, and to proclaim that God is willing to forgive sin. 'Forgiveness is dependent upon no condition whatever but repentance, and the amendment which is the necessary consequence of sincere repentance.'¹ As proof of this he cites the parables of the Prodigal Son, and the Pharisee and the Publican. The Publican, who smote upon his breast and said, 'God be merciful to me a sinner', went down to his house *justified* rather than the self-complacent Pharisee. That, in a few simple words, is the gist of our Lord's teaching, and that is all that the sinner requires for salvation. The only value which is inherent in our Lord's death is purely subjective, consisting in the love and reverence which it excites in our minds as a signal spectacle of self-sacrifice. Its value was in essence of the same character as the effect produced upon us by the sufferings of other righteous men, though it is admitted that the death of the Messiah must naturally exercise a more powerful subjective influence.

¹ p. 25.

In maintaining this theory Dr. Rashdall is naturally brought face to face with contrary evidence contained in the Gospels; but he limits the relevant passages to two—the reference to the mission of the Suffering Servant involved in the passage which we have already noticed—‘The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many’; and the words of institution at the Eucharist, especially at the giving of the cup—according to St. Mark and St. Matthew, ‘This is My blood of the covenant which was shed for many’ (St. Matthew adds, ‘for the remission of sins’); according to St. Paul and St. Luke, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood’ (St. Luke adds, ‘which was shed for you’).¹ Both these passages, it may be noted, belong to the Marcan tradition; yet by a process of very special pleading Dr. Rashdall argues that the words are later doctrinal accretions, and that our Lord never used them. The fact that our Lord connected His mission with the Isaianic conception of the Servant of Yahweh he cannot well deny; but he does deny that He identified Himself with that ideal figure in any exclusive way, or thought of connecting His death with the conception of the Suffering Servant’s death as a guilt-offering; the only trace of His having done so being, he asserts, the ‘solitary sentence of Mark’.² The fact that the conception of the Servant was not identified with the Messiah by the Jews of our Lord’s time is treated as an argument against our Lord’s having so regarded it. Dr. Rashdall does not, apparently, allow our Lord any independence of thought in interpreting the Old Testament.

I have thought it best, before alluding to Dr. Rashdall’s views, to develop the conception of the Suffering Servant as we find it in Deutero-Isaiah, and as it is taken up by our Lord in the Gospel-records, and I think that I may leave it at that. I believe that few will hesitate in deciding which view has the greater approximation to truth.

But why does Dr. Rashdall deny any objective theory of

¹ St. Mark 14²⁴, St. Matt. 26²⁸, 1 Cor. 11²⁵, St. Luke 22²⁰. ² p. 36.

Atonement, and how does he account for the fact that such a theory is held by every New Testament writer who touches on the subject? The reason for his denial seems to be the view that no objective theory can be held which is not irrational or immoral. In his eyes St. Paul is the arch-offender, for he maintains that his theory is one of vicarious punishment, the wrath of God against sin being satisfied by the punishment of the innocent in place of the guilty. This is based, he maintains, upon the Old Testament theory of sacrifice. He is too honest to argue that St. Paul invented the idea of objective Atonement, and gives full weight to his statement in 1 Corinthians, 'I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures'.¹ 'It was already an article of the Church's creed when the Apostle of the Gentiles was baptized into it. It was due neither to theorizing nor to the visions of St. Paul. It resulted from the reflection of the Church in the interval which elapsed between the Crucifixion and St. Paul's conversion—a period which cannot have been more than a very few years' (I quote the actual words of Dr. Rashdall).²

We are to believe, then, that the culminating feature in the conception of the Suffering Servant—that of a guilt-offering for the sins of many—was ignored by our Lord in His adoption of the rôle of the Servant; though Dr. Rashdall is not bold enough to assert that He ever actually repudiated it, or indeed took any steps to guard His followers against falling into a misconception on the subject. Yet, almost immediately after the Crucifixion, reflection on the meaning of that event led His followers to seize upon the salient conception in the Servant's work, and to apply it to our Lord's death, thus formulating an objective theory of the Atonement which, to a greater or less degree, affected the teaching of the majority of the New Testament writers and the whole subsequent thought of the Church. This, too, in spite of the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost.

¹ 1 Cor. 15³.

² pp. 75 f.

Dr. Rashdall's view of St. Paul's doctrine is, as we have seen, that it is a theory of vicarious or substituted punishment. Again and again he uses this expression; though in one passage he somewhat naively admits that it is 'important to note that St. Paul never actually applies the word "punishment" to Christ's death. He seems instinctively to shrink from it.'¹ This doctrine, it is asserted, is drawn from the Old Testament conception of sacrifice. It only concerns me, as an Old Testament scholar, to point out (in a few words, as needs be) that his conception of sacrifice is radically incorrect.

To the important subject of sacrifice he devotes rather less than three pages.² He rightly recognizes that the earliest form of sacrifice took the shape of a communion-feast shared by the God and His worshippers; and also that out of the idea of communion the propitiatory idea could easily grow. Later forms of sacrifice, which in the Old Testament are the whole burnt-offering and its further developments, the sin-offering and the guilt-offering, he correctly describes as originating in the conception of a gift made to the Deity. From this he leaps to the conclusion that the innocent victim was thought to be punished for the sin of the offerer.

Is it possible that two conceptions could stand in more glaring contrast? How could it be thought that a victim loaded with vicarious sin, and therefore morally and ceremonially unclean and unholy, could be an acceptable gift to the holy God, whose hatred of and recoil from the pollution of sin was the very reason for which the sacrifice was offered?

We must look elsewhere for the inner meaning of these gift-offerings. Let us take the sin- and guilt-offerings as the most typical and developed forms. The purpose of both was piacular, i. e. they were offered to make atonement for or wash away the sin of the guilty community or individual (the root-meaning of the word rendered 'atone' in Hebrew and

¹ p. 98.

² pp. 66-7.

Babylonian is 'wipe off' or 'make bright *or* white'). It is important to notice the manner in which this atonement was carried into effect. That the animal is not regarded as a vicarious *sin-bearer*, punished by the penalty of death, is quite certain. The purpose of the imposition of the offerer's hand on its head was not the transference of guilt from him to the offering.¹ Rather, since the same ceremony accompanies the other forms of sacrifice—the thank-offering of the communion-feast and the whole burnt-offering

¹ In the ritual of the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16) the goat 'for Azazel' is (as we are expressly told in *vv.*^{17, 22}) regarded as charged with sin and as carrying it off. The meaning of the term '*Azāzēl*' has caused much discussion. The rendering of the Authorized Version is 'scape-goat'; but this interpretation is now abandoned, as the expression is obviously not a description of the animal itself, but is intended to indicate its *destination*. It is therefore generally considered that Azazel was the name given to a demon who was supposed to haunt solitary places, and who, in this special ritual, is taken as the personification of the spirit of evil. The sending away of the goat, charged with the sins of Israel, to this demon, meant that the sins were thus borne right away from the presence of Yahweh, never more to be remembered against His people.

That this goat, however, was not an offering to Yahweh is proved by the distinction drawn in *v.*⁸—'one lot for Yahweh, and the other lot for Azazel'—a distinction which emphasizes the fact that the goat for Yahweh's sin-offering was *not* regarded as charged with sin. Though the goat for Azazel *was* so charged, and, according to the Mishna-treatise *Yoma*, was pushed over a precipice 12 miles from Jerusalem and dashed to pieces, it does not seem to have been regarded as punished for the sins of the nation, but merely as the vehicle by means of which those sins were banished: cf. the ritual of the living bird which, when loosed in the open field, symbolically carried off the disease of leprosy (Lev. 14^{4 ff.}); and Zech. 5^{5 ff.}, where Wickedness, typified as a woman, is enclosed in an ephah, and carried off bodily to the land of Shinar.

The Fathers often explain the 'scape-goat' as typical of Christ (cf. *Ep. Barn.* 7; Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 40; Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* iii. 7, *Adv. Iud.* 14; as well as later writers); but this is of a part with the tendency to see foreshadowings of our Lord everywhere in the Old Testament. The sense in which the ideal Servant is said to 'bear sin' (i. e. the penalty of it) has already been noticed (p. 9).

—it simply represents the *dedication* of the animal to God upon the part of the offerer. And again, if the sin of the offerer were thought to be transferred to the animal, it would, as we have seen, of necessity be regarded as unclean; but, on the contrary, it is explicitly stated to be most holy. The smoke of its burning is said to form 'an odour of satisfaction' to the Deity—an expression which, we may note, is taken over by St. Paul. and applied in Ephesians to our Lord's atoning death—'Christ . . . gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odour of a sweet smell'.¹

We may surely find the true significance of the sin-offering in the fact that the animal was always without blemish, the best that could be procured. The offering is therefore typical of a perfect sinless life which God consents to accept in place of the imperfect life of the worshipper. The offering was carried out through the entire dedication made by death, i.e. the offering of the *life* of the victim to God through the *blood* in which that life resided.

The root-conception of Old Testament sacrifice was a striving after communion with God. Polluted with sin, and unable to cleanse himself, the worshipper sought for something pure and holy outside himself, by identification with which his sin might be purged and he might be given a new start, strengthened and accepted through union with the Divine, which, as in one form of sacrifice it was typified by the communion-feast, so in the other is represented by the ritual of the atoning blood, applied to the horns of the altar.

This, in spite of some few difficulties of language, is surely the doctrine of St. Paul, as it is the doctrine of other New Testament writers. God has granted us His precious and exceeding great promises, that through these we may become partakers of the Divine nature.²

One side of St. Paul's Atonement-doctrine is studiously kept in the background by Dr. Rashdall. He fails to

¹ Ephes. 5².

² 2 Pet. 1⁴.

connect it with the conception that we are baptized into Christ's death, buried with Him in baptism, that with Him we may rise to newness of life. He makes no mention at all of the phrase 'a new creation', or of the conception which is expressed by the terms 'in Christ', and 'until Christ be formed in you'. Yet this doctrine of a mystical union of the believer with the perfect life which has been offered on his behalf—a doctrine which appears as prominently in the Fourth Gospel as it does in the writings of St. Paul—is the central conception of the sacrificial doctrine of Atonement. That sense of release from the burden of guilt and of spiritual uplift which we may believe that the devout Israelite experienced as he watched the smoke of his pure offering ascending to heaven, has become, in an immeasurably enhanced degree, a living experience of rebirth and imparted spiritual strength for every Christian who stakes his hopes upon the finished work of his Redeemer; and not least for the simple and unlearned who, though holding no reasoned doctrine of Atonement, have yet the conviction that Christ has *done* something for them which of themselves they could not accomplish, and prove the fact of their belief by living a life conformed, in its measure, to the Christian ideal.

If this is true, we may continue to 'preach Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumbling-block, and unto Gentiles foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.'





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