

THE ATONEMENT FOR SIN – R3390

1. What do “vicarious punishment,” “vicarious atonement,” and “vicariousness of sin” mean? (Par 2,8)
2. What is the “Scientist’s View” of the above, as quoted in the article? What premises form the basis for his argument? (Par 2-5)
3. What flaws are found within the “Scientist’s View,” according to Br. Russell? How did false but popular Christian doctrine influence the scientist’s arguments? (Par 6-9, 21-23)
4. What are the elements of the correct view of the atonement for sin? (Par 9-18)
5. What was the reward of “the joy set before him?” As followers of Christ, how are we motivated by the same? (Par 19-20)
6. How does this emergent form of “higher criticism” in the article compare or contrast with popular views of some scientists, scholars, and Biblical critics today? (Par 24-27)

R. 3390 – THE ATONEMENT FOR SIN

A SCIENTIST'S VIEW

1. SIR OLIVER LODGE, F.R.S., D.Sc., of Birmingham University, England, has recently expressed his views on the above fundamental feature of the Christian religion. Such gentlemen in the past have kept their unbelief somewhat secret, but now they are encouraged, emboldened, by the temerity of the "higher critic" infidels in pulpits and seminaries, and are speaking their minds more freely. This man learned in worldly lore, and the trusted educator of many good people's sons, expresses his unbelief in the first proposition in his published article, thus:--

2. "In the days when the vicariousness of sin could be accepted, and when an original fall of Adam could be held as imputed to the race, it was natural to admit the possibility of a vicarious punishment and to accept an imputed righteousness. In the days when God could be thought of as an angry Jehovah who sent pestilences until he was propitiated by the smell of a burnt-offering, it was possible to imagine that the just anger of an offended God could be met by the sacrifice of an innocent victim....

3. "As a matter of fact, the higher man of today is not worrying about his sins at all, still less about their punishment. His mission, if he is good for anything, is to be up and doing, and in so far as he acts wrongly or unwisely he expects to suffer. He may unconsciously plead for mitigation on the ground of good intentions, but never either consciously or unconsciously will any one but a cur ask for the punishment to fall on some one else, nor rejoice if told that it has already so fallen.

4. "As for 'original sin' or 'birth sin' or other notion of that kind, by which is partly meant the sins of his parents, that sits absolutely lightly on him. As a matter of fact, it is non-existent, and no one but a monk could have

invented it. Whatever it be, it is not a business for which we are responsible. We did not make the world; and an attempt to punish us for our animal origin and ancestry would be simply comic, if any one could be found who was willing to take it seriously.

5. "Here we are; we have risen, as to our bodies, from the beasts; as a race the struggle has been severe, and there have been both rises and falls. We have been helped now and again by bright and shining individual examples--true incarnations of diviner spirits than our own--notably by one supremely bright Spirit who blazed out nineteen hundred years ago, and was speedily murdered by the representatives of that class whose mission it appears to be to wage war against the prophets, and to do their worst to exterminate new ideas and kinds of goodness to which they are not accustomed. Fortunately for the race, they are only able to kill the body; the soul, the inspiration, the germ of a new and higher faith seems forever beyond their grasp."

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6. Here we see the wretched effect of false doctrine: we see a noble mind poisoned against the Bible and its grand plan of redemption through the death of Christ. The time will come when grand men like this one will be relieved of their blindness. "All the blind eyes shall be opened and all the deaf ears shall be unstopped." Thank God! Now we cannot hope to influence such: we cannot hope to antidote the poison of error in those already poisoned, but we do hope to forewarn and forearm and put on guard those not already prejudiced and poisoned. This is our constant aim in this "evil day."

7. Sir Oliver Lodge will not deny that "pestilences" and other forms of disease--death--have reigned over the world for centuries. He may deny that there is any personal God, and call Nature his God, and thus charge to irresponsible Nature all the evils that afflict men: but so surely as he

admits a personal and intelligent Almighty God he must also admit that this Almighty being causes "pestilences," diseases, death, or else that knowing of these he is careless or indifferent to the interests of his creatures. This issue cannot be honestly dodged. The answer is one of the keys to the argument.

8. The spiteful animosity against the Biblical teaching of vicarious atonement by Jesus for the sin of Adam is undoubtedly engendered by the labyrinth of hateful and unscriptural errors which ever since "the dark ages" has been associated with the doctrine of the vicarious atonement in all the creeds of Christendom.

9. This wrong view (which has misled many honest minds into opposition to the true view) is briefly stated thus: God became enraged at Adam and Eve for their disobedience and damned them to an eternity of torture, and, still not satisfied, he included all their children that should ever be born. Later on Jesus, by his sufferings, caused a cancellation of part of the sentence so far as part of the people were concerned. Or, as some view it, God declared that he would never recede from his anger, would never forgive any, but let all roast forever unless Jesus would suffer for some and release them. No wonder every true man would reject such a conception of God, or if he accepted it would refuse to worship him or to regard him as even an equal with honest manhood. This is not the view of "vicarious atonement" which we defend, nor the one which the Bible presents.

HOW DIFFERENT AND HOW REASONABLE IS THE BIBLE VIEW OF THE MATTER!

10. The divine decree is, that absolute obedience to the divine commands shall be required of all and for the good of all. Because all unrighteousness is sin, therefore the decree, "The wages of sin is death"-- to the intent that sin and its attendant misery may not be eternal--to the intent that perfection in holiness, perfection in life and perfection in

happiness may forever be indissolubly connected.

11. With such a righteous indignation against sin, with such a just and holy desire that it might not be perpetual, God made his law and explained it to Adam, and, when the latter had violated that law, pronounced the sentence, and has for six thousand years backed up the forces of nature which executed that decree, "Dying thou shalt die."

12. Who can find fault with the sentence for original sin as it is expressed in the Bible--a death sentence. No reasonable man could deny that God has the right as well as the power to destroy in death any creature who will not conform to his just and wise law. This is the case as stated in the Bible, exactly. "The sting of death [the sting, or virus, which produces death and all its attendant sufferings] is sin; and the power of sin [to thus sting to death] is the Law,"—"The wages of sin is death."--I Cor. 15:56; Rom 6:23.

13. The dying processes affected the first perfect pair in every way--mentally, morally and physically. Degeneracy began at once, and once, and of course affected their offspring according to the laws of nature. Nothing can be charged to the dishonor or injustice of the Creator. In every particular he was well within the rights of his position--yea, he was in duty bound to make the condition such that the sinful and imperfect would not live on forever. And so it was that father Adam died "in the day" (the thousand year day-- 2Pe 3:8) in which he became a sinner, and none of his posterity ever lived more than 969 years.

14. Now, let us not complicate the question by theological "smoke" from the "dark ages," but standing by the simple narrative of the Scriptures,--that "by one man's disobedience sin entered into the world, and death by [as a result of] sin, and so [thus] death passed upon all men, because all are sinners" (Rom 5:12), let us inquire respecting the vicarious atonement and its necessity under the

conditions set forth in the Scriptures as above.

15. Granted that God did pronounce a just sentence of death upon Adam, the question is, How could he get rid of that sentence so as to ever grant mankind a resurrection from death to life, and all that was lost by the disobedience under its sentence? God is "unchangeable," he assures us; hence this sentence of the great Supreme Court of the Universe is unalterable, unless it can be shown to be unjust or unwise. Neither of these could be acknowledged and hence the sentence is unalterable.

16. But could not God devise some method for the rescue of Adam if he so desired? Although human wisdom could see no way, could not divine wisdom and love aid and find a way out of the dilemma? The Scriptures say, Yes; and proceed to tell us that it was in order "that God might be just and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus" that God provided a vicarious atonement (blood atonement) for Adam's sin. Blood-atonement means atonement by the sacrifice of a life to pay for the condemned life.

17. Now, Professor Lodge acknowledges Jesus to have lived and to have died--there is no dispute as to the facts. The question at issue then is, Did the fact that Jesus died for Adam's sin make his death any the more severe or unjust or improper?

18. We concede at once that God could not have justly demanded that his Son become a man, and then as a man die for the sins of the one man, who had been sentenced to extinction because of sin, and whose race in his loins at the time of his transgression shared his penalty and would equally share anything done for his relief. However desirable such a result, or however impossible to reach that result otherwise, Justice would forbid such an exaction.

19. But the case is otherwise stated in the Scriptures, --and their testimony respecting

the divine program must be taken as a whole. The Bible account shows that, so far from compelling the great sacrifice, God induced it: he offered the Only Begotten Son a great reward as compensation for the faithful performance of the service. The statement is, that "for the joy that was set before him [Jesus] endured the cross, despising the shame." Read carefully the context also.--Heb 12:1-29.

20. As to what the reward or "joy" consisted of, we may draw from the Scriptures very satisfactory conclusions. (1) "Lo, I come to do thy will, O my God. Thy law [will] is written in my heart." This undoubtedly would be the first moving impulse. (2) "He was moved with compassion for the multitude," and said, "The good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." "I lay down my life of myself,--no man taketh it from me." (3) At his resurrection the Father gave him a still higher form of life than he had ever previously enjoyed--life on a higher plane—"far above angels, principalities and powers,"--although he had always been the first and highest of all the heavenly sons of God—"the First-begotten," "the beginning of the creation of God," and who in all things had always had preeminence over others and been next to the Father. Henceforth, as a reward for his obedience, love and zeal, he was made a "partaker of the divine nature" with "life in himself"--a life inextinguishable and needing no supply or sustenance --immortality, in the strictest meaning of that word.

21. What fault can be found with such a substitution, with such a vicarious atonement for the sinner? Had Jesus been compelled to "suffer for us, the just for the unjust," we might plead injustice. Had he even willingly died for us, but never been raised from the dead, we might have murmured that he was more obedient than the Father was kind. Had he been raised from the dead a man, and not as the Apostle declares, "a life-giving spirit," it would have meant the taking back of the "price," and would have implied also his perpetual degradation to a lower plane of

being, because of his obedience to the Father's will. But, as the matter is outlined in the Scriptures, neither of these objections can be urged, for our Lord was raised from death "to die no more--death hath no more dominion over him." He could not die now because made possessor of immortality, "the divine nature," which cannot die, being death proof.

SUFFERING FOR UNWISDOM ONLY?

22. If it were only the foolish and the wicked that suffered now the Professor's logic would be more apparent: but if a man should expect to suffer for wrong and unwisdom should he not expect to prosper for well doing? But we all know that the wicked often prosper most, and that the good and the pure and the wise frequently suffer; witness the cases of the prophets of old and of our Lord and his apostles, and of all his faithful followers, of whom it is written: "All that will live godly in this life shall suffer persecution." (2Ti 3:12.) Indeed, is not almost all of the wickedness of the world practised at the expense of the innocent?

23. How about the pains and death of infants, who constitute nearly one-half of our race: are they suffering for their wrong-doing? If not, for whose error do they suffer? Who gives a better answer to this query than the Bible gives--that they die because they have inherited the weaknesses and blemishes of Adam? The fact is that sin and death are upon our race, and that we are born to their influences.

24. Men who think have indeed, as the Professor declares, ceased to concern themselves about "original sin" or "birth sin," but not because a monk invented the thought. They know that they were "born in sin," "prone to sin," and that its bonds are fast upon their every power. They know, if they will but think, that Moses, who first told of original sin, was not a monk. Neither was our Lord, who declared that he "came to seek and to save [recover] that which was lost."

Neither were the apostles monks: least of all that logical man the Apostle Paul, whose words we have quoted foregoing.

EVOLUTION THEORY THE PROFESSOR'S SNARE

25. The Professor's difficulty and how he fell into it are clear from the paragraph last above quoted. He was too logical to be held long by false conceptions of the atonement as a means of rescue from eternal torture, and in discarding that he discarded the Bible which he believed so taught. Next he was ensnared by human speculation and science, falsely so-called, into the Evolution theory. This is shown by his words, "Here we are. We have risen, as to our bodies, from the beasts."

26. Illogically and without evidence the Professor is led into Theosophy--into the belief that each man is the incarnation of a previously unknown spirit being. This is evident from the words "true incarnations of diviner spirits than our own." Alas! how liable all of us would be to fall into confusion of thought if we were to reject the divine Word of revelation. How quickly such folly manifests itself, no matter how learned or brilliant the individual!

27. The Professor's closing reference to "the germ of a new and higher FAITH" seems peculiar in view of the fact that he appears to have no faith in the Bible, very little confidence in a God of Nature. We are forced to the conclusion that the Professor's "germ of a new and higher faith" is self-faith or self-confidence respecting "reincarnations," and a gradual evolution from microbes to beasts and from beasts to men and from men to gods. Those who can be satisfied with such faiths are welcome to them. As for us, we prefer "the faith once delivered to the saints;" but we want it pure--free from traditions of the dark ages, which dishonor God and insult reason and lead on to such darkness of worldly wisdom as we are here criticising.