

the command, "He shall make an atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make an atonement for the tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar, and he shall make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation."

In silence waits the scape-goat for the coming forth of the High Priest, when upon his head, by symbolic form, are laid the iniquities of the people, when with the scarlet ribbon removed he is driven forth "into the wilderness," and the sins of the people are atoned or covered up. The killing of the one goat, and the driving away of the other, are the one sacrifice of the day.

We observe,

First: *God's character is not changed by sacrifice.* He neither regards sin with less hatred, nor loves the sinner less because of these. The burnt-offerings and sacrifices of the centuries have added no jot or tittle to his immeasurable love. However much man changes, God changes not. Just here, in some minds, has arisen a misapprehension. Because we have become his enemies, we imagine that he has become our enemy, but no supposition could be more false. Measure this thought by the greatest sacrifice, and we learn that "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." The sacrifice of Calvary—compared with which all others were as shadows to the light—was the natural outcome of the Divine nature, rather than the means of changing that nature. This sacrifice, like all others, expressed his change of attitude.

Secondly: *These mere sacrifices possessed no intrinsic value.* We are told by Isaiah that the "multitude of sacrifices" are a "vain oblation." Micah declares that the Lord is not pleased "with thousands of rams or with tens of thousands of rivers of oil." The only sacrifice that pleases God is a broken and a contrite heart. Thus much, therefore, follows: these sacrifices were not transactions of any intrinsic value to God, in themselves considered. God made use of his law to proclaim these eternal truths.

I. *The Divine testimony against sin.* These were the chosen people whose God alone was holy. Let but one of the

heathen tribes behold the strange ritual of this great day, and what would be his amazement? They were the people professing a goodness above all others. What means all this abasement? the stranger would ask. Why is it ye will not traffic for gain? and but one answer could be given: We have sinned.

II. *The basis of atonement.* The Hebrew word translated atonement, means "to cover." It means that as a curtain hides its object from sight, so the covering hides the sin.

There is no sin without law, since, as Paul says, "Where no law is there is no transgression." No sophistry can make us conceive of God as ignoring his own righteous law. The breaking of His law, on our part, cannot lead him to despise a law which we ought to have kept. Our sinfulness cannot change His nature, although it changes His attitude towards us. Love prompts a remedy for the broken law, but our hope for salvation is based on the Divine forgiveness, and not upon the Divine nature, although God is love.

The whole sacrificial order of the Day of Atonement was given for the cleansing from sin. Just as Christ afterwards came "to save His people from their sins," even so this was the meaning of that shadowy ritual. The blood of the slain goat was sprinkled because of the people's transgressions. The scape-goat is represented as bearing away all their iniquities. Repeatedly are we informed that the purpose of all this sacrifice was "that ye may be clean from all your sins."

No one will say that the sacrifice of the goat, or lamb, was any equivalent for the life of either the man or the nation; but it kept before the worshippers this great lesson, that the God of love must respect his holy law even at the expense of death. These sacrifices, repeated over and over again, were the elementary lessons declaring that, by-and-by, the law must be made honourable by the costliest of all sacrifices. Though the law made nothing perfect, yet it was the easiest, plainest way of declaring what must come, since, in due time, Christ, as the goat of the Lord's lot, must die for the ungodly; and as upon the scape-goat, so upon him the iniquities of us all must be laid.