

**THE ATONEMENT VIEWED IN THE  
LIGHT OF CERTAIN MODERN  
DIFFICULTIES: BEING THE  
HULSEAN LECTURES FOR 1883,  
1884**

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The Atonement viewed in the light of certain modern difficulties: being the Hulsean lectures for 1883, 1884 by J. J. Lias

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**J. J. LIAS**

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MODERN DIFFICULTIES.



# THE ATONEMENT

Viewed in the Light of Certain  
Modern Difficulties.

BEING THE

*HULSEAN LECTURES FOR 1883, 1884*

BY THE

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## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

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THE sale of a first edition of these Lectures seems to indicate that the want they were designed to supply has been felt. And in truth there is great need just now for a more widespread acquaintance with the true attitude of Christian theology in all ages toward the principle of Atonement. Every assault upon the Christian faith in these days involves an attack upon what is described in these pages as the "Substitution theory." And this theory is not regarded in any sense as a theological outpost. It is represented in all sincerity—for myriads of Christian Divines have so represented it—as the fundamental principle of the Christian faith. It is thus attacked in Mr. Cotter Morison's *Service of Man*, a book which appeared after these Lectures were delivered. "The eternity of hell torments," he says,<sup>1</sup> "is a doctrine discarded by a number of divines, who yet cling to the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Atonement. There is nothing to assure us that, in a hundred years' time, these also will not be discovered to be unscriptural." He admits, however, that "the Christian theology was evolved" during the decline and fall of the Roman empire.<sup>2</sup> Thus the "moral iniquities and obliquities" of which he com-

<sup>1</sup> *Service of Man*, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

plains<sup>1</sup> were not at least the work of Christ and His Apostles. But with regard to the "doctrine of the Atonement," to which he clearly refers,<sup>2</sup> for he describes it as "the centre of the Christian religion," its "moral iniquity and obliquity" must be set down to a period much later still.

That the Substitution theory does suggest grave difficulties to an increasing number of minds is a fact that cannot be disputed. And it is therefore necessary to diffuse as widely as possible the knowledge of the fact that the Christian Church is in no way committed to it. At the same time, it cannot be too emphatically declared that nowhere in these pages will a denial of Substitution as an *element* in redemption be found. Vicarious suffering is the law of the universe, and any system professing to explain the redemption of mankind without reference to it must needs be a failure. This truth has been most distinctly admitted in these Lectures.<sup>3</sup> What has been resisted is the attempt to represent it as the only element in Christ's work of satisfaction for sin. That Christ endured many things to save us from the suffering which is the natural consequence of our sin, is not, cannot be, denied. What is denied is, that the Father's justice or wrath was satisfied by exacting a certain amount of punishment from the Son, and that this punishment was endured by Him in our stead, so as to free us from any liability whatever to any part of such punishment. Such a theory, general as it was, no doubt, half a century ago, has been shown in these pages not only to be contrary to reason, but contrary to the plainest facts. It has been also shown that not only has it no support from the great Divines of the

<sup>1</sup> Page 37.

<sup>2</sup> Page 38.

<sup>3</sup> See pp. 43, 66-70, 88-90.

- Catholic Church, but that all the great Puritan writers, including Calvin and John Owen, have shrunk from the naked statement of a doctrine which their followers have had no hesitation in laying down as the very foundation of all Christian belief. It is of supreme importance at the present time to let men know that however industriously this doctrine has been propagated, neither Scripture nor the Catholic church are responsible for it.

The author has to thank his various critics for the fair and candid way in which his book has been discussed, and to express his obligations to various correspondents for their expressions of opinion. Only one review of a decidedly hostile character has reached the writer. If he refers to it for a moment, it is in order to offer a plea for the more accurate use of language. The reviewer, with a very free use of italics and capitals to mark the horror with which these Lectures have filled him, selects for the expression of his strongest indignation, the statement in page 31, that "the *ψυχή*" is "the life-principle which man has in common with the animals." That the word "animal" has undergone some deterioration in our modern use of it, is perfectly true. Nevertheless, it may be useful to remember that an *animal* is that which possesses an *anima*, and that *anima* is the equivalent of the Greek *ψυχή*. If controversialists would but define their terms before beginning their disputes, in most cases controversy would be still-born. To one other review only does the writer wish to refer. A Wesleyan publication, after some discussion of the statements in these Lectures, makes a frank admission that the doctrine of Atonement has often been very rashly stated, and expresses a hope that the teachers of religion will henceforth be more guarded in their expressions. If the perusal of this little book shall lead