

**THE DOCTRINE OF THE
ATONEMENT: AND ITS
HISTORICAL EVOLUTION AND
RELIGION AND MODERN
CULTURE**

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The doctrine of the atonement: and its historical evolution and religion and modern culture by
Auguste Sabatier

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AND

Religion and Modern Culture

BY THE LATE

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FOREWORD

THE following treatise is an attempt at a systematic application of the historical method to the study of religious beliefs and doctrines, in order to show, by a practical example, the nature and fruitfulness of the method. The author does not believe in spontaneous generation in the realm of thought any more than in the domain of life. For the most recent of harvests must yet have had a seed-time. Men's ideas arise and are linked together just like external events; they advance now by association and synthesis, now by contradiction and analysis. This is especially true of religious ideas. Nothing is more interesting than to follow them through their metamorphoses; nor could anything be more

useful ; for to investigate the inevitable transformations they undergo is the safest way to criticise them objectively and scientifically. That the forms assumed by the ideas which prevail at the present time are immutable and final, is far from being the author's belief. These forms themselves are temporary. In this chain of evolution each generation has its part to perform both in thinking and in acting. The important matter is that it should contribute to both, while remaining faithful to the divine law, the consciousness of which it has achieved.

Nor is this scepticism, any more than what was in the mind of Paul when he said that, having become a man, he had put away childish things ; adding, further, that his present knowledge was imperfect and would be done away when the time came for him to know even as he had been known of God. Yea, and for us, just as for Paul, these three even now abide : faith in the Spirit which never ceases to work with the spirits of men,