

**AT ONEMENT; OR,
RECONCILIATION
WITH GOD**

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At Onement; or, Reconciliation with God by George Coulson Workman

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BY

GEORGE COULSON WORKMAN,

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TO

PROFESSOR JOHN WILSON, M.A., LL. D.

For more than forty years in his lifetime

*An eminent Teacher of Greek and Latin in Victoria University
(Canada)*

*THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED
AS A TOKEN OF
ADMIRATION AND VENERATION*

PREFACE

THIS is an inductive study of divine Reconciliation, based upon a critical interpretation of all the Biblical passages bearing on the question. The plan, as well as the analysis, is entirely new; and the method of treatment seems the only one by which the subject can be properly elucidated.

The title indicates the true nature, as well as the practical character, of the work. It is not Atonement, because that is an indefinite term; it is not the Atonement, because that is an ambiguous expression; nor is it the doctrine of the Atonement, because that is a theological phrase; but it is the doctrine of Reconciliation with God, as set forth in the Scriptures.

Long years ago I saw that the prepositions used in the Bible of the work of Christ, whether those referring to his death or those referring to his suffering, did not suggest the idea of substitution; but that, in every case, what Jesus is said to have done and suffered for us is said to have been done and suffered in our behalf and for our sake. Had that fact been recognized by the early theologians, the substitutionary theory of Atonement would

never have been constructed, because the writers of Scripture knew, as well as we, that nothing moral could be either substituted or transferred.

Many years since, too, I observed that theologians had given a pagan meaning to certain New Testament terms by going to heathen rather than Hebrew authorities, and I have been delighted to find that other Biblical students have noticed the same thing. Speaking recently in his correspondence column of the *British Weekly* with respect to the term propitiation, for instance, Professor David Smith, D.D., of the Presbyterian college, Londonderry, declared that, as it is commonly understood, the word conveys "a heathen idea." Throughout these pages I have shown how a heathen content has been given to several other terms.

The writers of the New Testament were sane men; and, though some of their ways of speaking were somewhat similar to those of their neighbours, their habits of thought were very different. Much of the language used by them, moreover, was both symbolic and figurative. Unscientific theologians have perverted what they taught respecting Reconciliation by taking their figurative language literally, and by misinterpreting their symbolic forms of speech. I have tried to rescue their teaching from misrepresentation by explaining Scripturally the symbols and figures which they employ.

The literature on the subject is very extensive,

and I have been reading and studying it all my life; but, as I was solely concerned with expounding the Scriptures, I have made almost no use whatever of it. Indeed, with the exception of an occasional sentence employed for the purpose of illustration, I have confined myself exclusively to my critical apparatus, having only in a general way referred to any technical treatise, ancient or modern, or quoted from any purely theological writer, living or dead.

In each chapter, I have sought merely to remove unscriptural ideas from the doctrine and to correct prevalent misconceptions concerning it; so that the work throughout, though critical, is uncontroversial. In short, it is both corrective and constructive on the basis of historical exegesis. Everything pertaining to the question has been deduced from the Scriptures and, so far as space permitted, demonstrated by them.

This is a book, therefore, for laymen as well as ministers. It is designed for all who wish to understand the richest practical subject in the Bible. I have tried to reduce the work to the smallest possible size, consistently with clearness and thoroughness. A few thoughts have been substantially repeated because of their great importance, and a few texts have been requoted because they have a particular significance in regard to different aspects of the doctrine.

It is well known to scholars that the word Christ is a title, not a proper name, and that in the gospels Jesus is described as the Messiah, or the Christ. But, since I regard Jesus of Nazareth as the spiritual Christ of God and the anointed Saviour of men, and since "Jesus Christ" and "Christ" are freely interchanged in the Pauline epistles, I have used Jesus and Christ interchangeably throughout this discussion.

I have been assured that people of all classes will be relieved to know that the work of Christ was necessary, not to appease the divine anger, nor to vindicate the divine honour, nor to satisfy the divine justice, but to bring men, through union with him, into a right relation with their Maker. For, while Reconciliation has both a Godward and a manward side, it is practically operative on men. In the mediatorial mission of Jesus the righteousness of God finds its supreme manifestation.

The volume is now given to the world as a modest contribution to constructive, or rather reconstructive, theology, and with the earnest hope that it may help, not only to relieve, but also to instruct, and may tend to establish faith, as well as dispel doubt.

G. C. W.

TORONTO, JUNE, 1911.