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# CONSCIENCE PACIFIED FOREVER

Horatius Bonar (1808-1889)

*“No more conscience of sins.”*

—Hebrews 10:2

Mark, at the outset, it is not said ‘sin,’ but ‘sins;’ not, no more sins, but no more ‘conscience of’—not consciousness of.

One great object in sacrifice is to provide acceptable worship; such as God can accept, and by means of which He will be glorified. All His works are to praise Him; all His creatures are to worship Him. It is His prerogative and joy to be worshipped; it is His creature’s part to give this worship. Our praise goes up; His love and blessing come down.

But in order to acceptable worship, there must be an acceptable worshipper. Hence the first thing in sacrifice is to provide such a worshipper. For we do not worship in order to be accepted by God, but because we have been accepted. It is not first worship and then acceptance; but first acceptance and then worship. Acceptable worship is the worship of an accepted man.

Sacrifice then provides for acceptance; secures it. It does so by substitution and exchange. It substitutes the just for the unjust, in the bearing of that guilt the existence of which was a barrier to all acceptance. Sacrifice is no mere piece of self-denial; and the sacrifice of the cross is no mere specimen of self-surrender which we are to imitate, and, in imitating, commend ourselves to God. It is substitution, suretyship, exchange; the innocent taking the place of the guilty, that the guilty may take the place of the innocent. It is this transference that produces the accepted worshipper; for worship, such as God delights in, can only come from one who has found favour in the sight of God; and the favour which a sinner finds in the sight of God, comes from his being identified with one who is already in favour, even the only-begotten Son.

But this is only one side of the great truth contained in sacrifice—the side that looks Godward; for every truth has a two-fold aspect, a divine and human side. We have seen the bearing of sacrifice as to God; let us mark its bearing on man, which is the great object of the epistle to the Hebrews.

*It is with the conscience that it has to do. Not with the heart, or the understanding, or the imagination; but with the conscience. An evil conscience is the great barrier to acceptable worship.* And what is an evil conscience? Not simply that which testifies against us that we have sinned—in that sense there are no consciences but evil ones on earth—but one with the pressure of guilt still upon it; with no sense of pardon, no knowledge of the removal of sin; with the persuasion that there is still something between the soul and God, some variance or estrangement; something which makes God frown upon him, which makes him afraid to look up to God, which makes it not safe in him to approach God because of sin; sin unremoved; unpardoned guilt.

Sacrifice, then, bears directly upon the conscience, by showing God’s way of removing guilt. The knowledge of the one sacrifice, the belief of God’s testimony regarding it, operates immediately on the conscience; because it is written, ‘Through this Man is preached the forgiveness of sins, and by Him all that believe are justified from all things.’ This immediate forgiveness and acceptance, as the consequence of our belief of the divine record regarding the finished sacrifice, places us at once in the position of accepted men on the one hand, and of men delivered from an evil conscience on the other; brought back, in so far as the conscience is concerned, to the position of the unsinning and the unfallen.

There are two things special in sacrifice, blood and fire: the blood, the substitution of life for life; the fire, the righteous displeasure of God consuming the victim and exhausting the penalty, satisfying righteousness, vindicating holiness, so as to set the guilty free. In the fire conscience recognizes the wrath due for sin—the ‘condemnation;’ in the blood it sees that wrath exhausted and extinguished—the ‘no condemnation.’ It needs to see both; both together; else its idea of each will be imperfect. Not the blood without the wrath (that would have no meaning); nor the wrath without the blood (that would only terrify). It is this double sight that relieves the conscience from the pressure of guilt and the dread of meeting God. Until this great sight is seen the sinner is not in a state for worship; for dread and darkness and uncertainty as to the gracious mind of God, are hinderers, nay, destroyers of all true worship; as well as of all true and happy service.

One great object of sacrifice, then, is to purge the conscience; to give us a ‘good conscience’ and a ‘true heart;’ to remove the dread of God, arising from the thought of His being our enemy, and of our sin being unpardoned. Revealed to us in the cross, we learn to trust Him; interpreted as His character and purposes are by the death of His Son, we are attracted to it; we ‘draw near with a true heart, in the full assurance of faith,’ having ‘no more conscience of sins.’ Instead of flying from God, we fly to Him, and rest in Him for evermore.

O blood of Christ, what a refuge art thou for a troubled conscience and a wounded spirit! O love of God, what a resting-place art thou for the sad and weary!