

Texts on Anger and Sacrifice #2

P. H. Reardon, *Reclaiming the Atonement*, vol. 1, pp. 13-14: Lyonnet demonstrated that attention to God's wrath was not part of the theology of Israel's sacrificial system. Indeed, the wrath of God was a concept alien to Israel's understanding of blood sacrifice; although the Hebrew Scriptures have a great deal to say about the divine wrath in connection with sin, they say nothing about it in connection with the sin offering.

And if the sin offering was not related to the wrath of God, how much less the other sacrifices prescribed in the Torah. The God worshipped in Israel's ancient temple was not bloodthirsty. When He became angry, the anger might be turned away (by the offering of incense, for example, a symbol of prayer), but it was never appeased by the shedding of blood.

Something similar must be noted with respect to punishment for sin. A chief problem with the theory of penal substitutionary atonement is the difficulty of justifying it within the biblical understanding of sacrifice. In the Torah there is no indication that the victims of Israel's various sacrifices—the bulls, the goats, the sheep, the doves, and so forth—were being punished in any sense whatever. Clearly those mactated animals were substitutes, but not in a sense that implied penal retribution. In Israel's sacrificial system, then, neither divine anger nor human punishment (*poena*) was a part of the picture.

Psalms 141 (Greek and Latin 140):

תִּכּוֹן תְּפִלָּתִי קְטֹרֶת לְפָנֶיךָ

Let my prayer be presented as incense before Your face

מִשְׁאֵת כַּפֵּי מִנְחַת־עֶרֶב

the raising of my hands, the evening sacrifice

1 Timothy 2.8 — I desire that in every place (ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ) men should pray, lifting up holy hands.

Origen, *On Prayer* 31.2 — The posture in which the hands are spread out and the eyes lifted up is to be preferred to all others, since the body adds to the prayer, as it were, the icon (τὴν εἰκόνα) of the qualities suitable to the soul.

Revelation 5 ⁸ Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

Revelation 8 ³ Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, in order make an offering, with the prayers of all the saints, upon the golden altar that was before the throne. ⁴ And the smoke of the incense, along with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand.

Numbers 17 ¹¹ Take a censer and put fire in it from the altar, put on incense, and carry it quickly to the congregation and *atone for them* (וִּכְפֹּר עֲלֵיהֶם), for *wrath* has gone forth from the Lord. ¹² Aaron took it, just as Moses had said, and he ran into the midst of the assembly, and behold, the plague had begun among the people. He placed the incense on it and *atoned for the people* (וַיִּכְפֹּר עַל-הָעָם). ¹³ He stood between the dead and the living, and the plague ceased.

Vulgate: Numbers 16 ⁴⁶ So Moses said to Aaron, "Take a censer and put fire in it from the altar, put incense on it, and take it quickly to the congregation in order to pray for them (*ut roges pro eis*); for wrath has gone out from the Lord. The plague has begun." ⁴⁷ Then Aaron took it as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the assembly; and already the plague had begun among the people. He took incense and, standing between the living and the dead, he prayed for the people (*pro populo deprecatus est*.)

2 Chronicles 29 ¹⁰ Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel, *that His fierce wrath may be averted from us*. ¹¹ My sons, do not be negligent now, for the Lord has chosen you [priests] to stand before Him, to do Him service, and that you should minister to Him and *burn incense*.

LXX: Exodus 17 ¹¹ Now it happened that when Moses held up his hands, Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hands, Amalek prevailed. ¹² But Moses' hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. ¹³ So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword

Mishnah, "Rosh Ha-Shanah" 3.8 — Could the hands of Moses help or hinder the battle? This teaches you, rather, that the Israelites prevailed when they directed their thoughts on high and preserved their hearts subject to their Father in heaven; otherwise they suffered defeat.

Rashi On Tanach, ad Ex 17:12 — Moses was such that his hands became faith (וַיִּהְיֶה יָדָיו אֲמוּנָה) spread forth in a steadfast and firm prayer.