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C. H. Dodd, "Hilaskesthai" and his critics

by Norman H. Young

Dr. Young, Lecturer in Theology in Avondale College, Cooranbong, New South Wales, is a former pupil of the Editor of THE EVANGELICAL QUARTERLY. He was awarded the Manchester degree of Ph.D. a few years ago for a thesis on the Day of Atonement in the New Testament. This naturally involved him in a special study of the atonement vocabulary of the Greek Bible, and the article which follows is a by-product of that study.

J. JEREMIAS¹ prefaces his magisterial study on the parables with a tribute to the equally great contribution made by C. H. Dodd. Jeremias remarks that it is inconceivable that future studies will go back behind Dodd; his work, in other words, is the turning point of parable studies, the place of departure for all subsequent investigations. The same is true of Dodd's essay² on *exilaskomai*. At first reading he appears to have said the last word on this debate; the years have not endorsed that first impression. If it has not proved definitive, it remains, however, true, that it is impossible to go back behind Dodd's study. It may not be final, but it is the point of departure for any present-day study.

I. DODD'S THESIS

Dodd establishes the meaning of *exilaskomai* and cognates by a threefold method of approach. He investigates firstly the other Greek terms which translate *kipper* besides *exilaskomai*. Second, he researches those words other than *kipper* which *exilaskomai* renders; and third, he considers *exilaskomai* as the basic LXX translation of *kipper*. Under the first heading he discovers *kipper* is translated by variants from *exilaskomai* like *hagiazō*, *katharizō*, *apaleiphō*, *athōō*; "words which give the meaning 'to sanctify', 'purify', persons or objects of ritual, or 'to cancel', 'purge away', 'forgive' sins".³ Dodd concludes, "we should therefore expect to find that they regard the *hilaskesthai* class as conveying similar ideas."⁴

In the second approach Dodd discovers that (*ex*)*ilaskomai* in the

¹ J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (London,² 1963).

² C. H. Dodd, "Hilaskesthai, Its Cognates, Derivatives, and Synonyms, in the Septuagint", *JTS* 32 (1931), pp. 352-360. Reprinted in *The Bible and the Greeks* (London, 1935), pp. 82 ff.

³ C. H. Dodd, *JTS* 32, p. 353.

⁴ *Ibid.*

middle with a human subject renders *hātā'*, and with divine subject *sālah*, the latter also being translated by the passive and *hileōs einai*. *Hileōs ginesthai* and *eulatos ginesthai* are also used for *nāsā'* with divine subject. Further, Hebrew words like *niham* and *riham* are rendered by *hilaskomai* in the passive or *hileōs ginesthai* where the subject is divine.

In this section Dodd meets four examples which threaten his thesis, for in Zech. 7: 2; 8: 22 and Mal. 1: 9 *exilaskomai* translates *hillāh* with the typical pagan meaning; and the context of Ps. 105: 30 (LXX) also indicates the same construction for that passage. The first three Dodd explains as exceptions, and notes that the context speaks of pagans and in two cases is probably used with a note of derision. The text from the Psalter has no object and elsewhere this is indicative of the meaning "to perform an act of expiation". Dodd concludes that with the exception of these last four texts the *hilaskomai* class of words when rendering roots other than *kipper* translates words either with human subject meaning "to cleanse from sins", "to expiate" or with divine subject "to be gracious". "to have mercy", "to forgive". The many LXX examples where the act of expiating sin has a divine subject, in essence an act of forgiveness, is without parallel in pagan sources and Dodd declares that it is a development whose origins are theological rather than philological.

Dodd arrives at a similar result for his analysis of (*ex*)*ilaskomai* as the translation of *kipper*, that is to say, that *kipper* when used as a religious term was not understood by the LXX translators "as conveying the sense of propitiating the Deity, but the sense of performing an act whereby guilt or defilement is removed, and accordingly rendered it by *hilaskesthai* in this sense".⁵ Thus the three lines of enquiry, Dodd claims, lead to a common conclusion:

Hellenistic Judaism, as represented by the LXX, does not regard the cultus as a means of pacifying the displeasure of the Deity, but as a means of delivering man from sin, and it looks in the last resort to God Himself to perform that deliverance, thus evolving a meaning of *hilaskesthai* strange to non-biblical Greek.⁶

All that remains, outside the four exceptional examples, of the usual Hellenistic usage are "faint echoes or reminiscences of a dead meaning."⁷

These results of his LXX inquiry Dodd applies to the NT texts and finds that these can be classified according to one or other of the categories he has defined from the LXX; the net result being that the common rendering of "propitiation" is illegitimate throughout the NT.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 359.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

Though falling on somewhat prepared soil, the power of Dodd's thesis can be assessed by a comparison between pre-1935 and post-1935 commentaries and translations, where it will be discovered on the one hand that "propitiation" is well-nigh universal while on the other "expiation".⁸ No matter what one's reaction to Dodd's short essay may be, it remains an outstanding testimony to the learning of this doyen, as he has been called, of British NT scholarship.

II. L. MORRIS

The evangelical scholar L. Morris first challenged Dodd's study in an article in the *Expository Times*,⁹ and later expanded this in a lengthy chapter in his investigation of biblical redemptive terms.¹⁰ Morris agreed that the use of *hilaskomai* and cognates in the LXX could not be understood absolutely in the usual pagan sense. The paucity of examples where God is the object of the verb, the occasions where God is subject, the Hebrew words besides *kipper* translated by (*ex*)*ilaskomai* all support the contention that (*ex*)*ilaskomai* is not directly related to the pagan terms without modification. What Morris wishes to contend for is that there is continuity despite the change, and that the LXX does not represent a volte-face or a standing of the term (*ex*)*ilaskomai* on its head.

His first point is obvious but nonetheless cogent: propitiation is the well-nigh universal meaning of the *hilaskomai* group throughout the abundant examples attested in the Greek literature. If the translators did not mean propitiation, Morris queries, why choose a word which was bound to be misunderstood, which, in fact, has been misunderstood until Dodd's correction?¹¹ The problem is that Morris's own modification of the meaning of (*ex*)*ilaskomai* in the LXX is a radical departure from profane usage, and is open to his own objection; either way (*ex*)*ilaskomai* could be, and has been, misconstrued by later generations. The translators when faced with the Hebrew contexts of *kipper* could not have failed to realize that often they were using (*ex*)*ilaskomai* in an unusual sense; the argument is over the degree of the departure.

The second issue Morris raises is really his major contention, that is, that Dodd's linguistic study is too rooted to words and fails to

⁸ As early as 1939 V. Taylor could assert that "C. H. Dodd's careful investigation of *hilaskesthai* and its cognates has conclusively proved that" the word is used in an unclassical sense. See "Great Texts Reconsidered: Romans 3, 25 f.", *ExT* 50 (1938-9), p. 296. Reprinted in *New Testament Essays* (London, 1970), pp. 127 ff.

⁹ L. Morris, "The Use of *hilaskesthai* etc. in Biblical Greek", *ExT* 62 (1950-51), pp. 227-233. Cf. *idem*, "The Wrath of God", *ExT* 63 (1951-52), pp. 142-145.

¹⁰ L. Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (London, 1955), pp. 125-185. The third edition (1965), pp. 144-213, contains slight modifications and additional material. Our references are to the third edition.

¹¹ *Apostolic*³, pp. 148 f.

do justice to the ideas as projected in the contexts. When the context is consulted, Morris claims, then it is discovered that "the averting of anger seems to represent a stubborn substratum of meaning from which all the usages can be naturally explained".¹² Elsewhere Dodd¹³ has tried to face this difficulty by reducing "wrath" to the inevitable effect of sin in a moral universe, that is, to evacuate it of all personal content. This effort of Dodd's is useful but not biblical.¹⁴ Generally speaking Morris is right. Wrath, or a term like it, is often a major aspect in the contexts where (*ex*)*ilaskomai* occurs, though frequently Morris must dig deep down in the verses (or even climb high!) to locate his "stubborn substratum". Morris was right to remind Dodd, and those who hailed his work as conclusive, of this element in the texts; he was wrong to think that it demonstrated that "propitiation" was the meaning of (*ex*)*ilaskomai* in the LXX. He succeeded in showing that the statement of G. B. Gray, which he quotes, is not to be quickly dismissed: "The ideas of expiation of sin and propitiation of God are in Hebrew thought closely related."¹⁵

Surprisingly Morris does not give much attention to Dodd's method of approach. It is this which gives Dodd's work the appearance of strength; his threefold examination of (*ex*)*ilaskomai* really claims that no matter in which direction one traces this root, the result leads to expiation not propitiation. If one is to challenge Dodd's work this is the point where the debate begins and ends. Morris does, however, say some things. He observes that it is incorrect to argue meanings for (*ex*)*ilaskomai* from other Greek words which render *kipper*, or from Hebrew words besides *kipper* which (*ex*)*ilaskomai* translates. In a wise statement he notes that "the very reason for the choice of the different word may be that the second context demands a word differing in meaning from that appropriate to the first passage".¹⁶ Cleansing or purging may be demanded by the context, but, states Morris, that does not mean that "averting of wrath" is lost sight of.

¹² *Apostolic*³, p. 173.

¹³ C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London, 1932), pp. 21 f.

¹⁴ Cf. C. F. D. Moule, "Punishment and Retribution", *SEA* 30 (1965), p. 23.

¹⁵ G. B. Gray, *Sacrifice in the Old Testament* (Oxford, 1925), p. 74; cf. S. Lyonnet, *Sin, Redemption and Sacrifice* (Rome, 1970), pp. 122 f.; J. Barr, *HDB*, Rev. ed., p. 77 (*S.V. 'Atonement'*).

¹⁶ *Apostolic*³, p. 156. In this third edition Morris adds a footnote claiming support from J. Barr, *Biblical Words for Time* (London, 1962), p. 108. Barr's statements concerning "illegitimate identity transfer" [*Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford, 1961), pp. 217 f.] do seem to validate Morris's contention, though Barr himself when questioned by the present writer declined to make any comment.

III. R. R. NICOLE

The conservative scholar R. R. Nicole¹⁷ takes issue with Dodd on the very point of the legitimacy of his method. The first line in Dodd's argument was that where other words are used to translate *kipper* they mean "sanctify", "cleanse", "cancel", "forgive", and that probably the *hilaskomai* class conveys similar ideas. Nicole challenges the force of this and accuses Dodd of choosing examples to fit his case and ignoring sixty-four per cent of the Greek words which translate *kipper* other than (*ex*)*ilaskomai*. If the totality of Greek variants are assembled the differences are so considerable as to make Dodd's conclusion meaningless, asserts Nicole.

The strength of Nicole's argument is reduced by an unfortunate and incredible linguistic error which he makes; he confuses the distinction between identical radicals, but which are in fact different words. He lists, for example, as words Dodd ignores, *kômē* (1 Sam. 6: 18; Song 7: 12), but this does not translate *kipper*, but as the LXX correctly for Sam., though incorrectly for Song,¹⁸ understood it, *kāphār* = village. Nicole also names *kupros* (Song 1: 14; 4: 13) as a variant that Dodd failed to mention; but again this does not translate *kipper*, but *kōpher*, meaning (as the LXX realized) "the flower of henna". *Katapetasma*, which Nicole also lists, is a translation error, rightly passed over by Dodd. We may forgive the LXX for mistaking *kappōreth* (Ex. 26: 34) for *pārōketh* in a context which speaks so often of the *pārōketh* (Ex. 26: 31, 33 (3x), 35). The text I Chr. 27: 25 (*kephārim*), which the LXX correctly translates with *epoikion*, is again from *kāphār* = village. As the root *kōpher* meaning "ransom", is now generally not related to *kipper*, Dodd was justified in ignoring the variants *lutron* or *lutra* and *allagma*, despite Nicole's claim to the contrary (Isa. 43: 3; Amos 5: 12; Ex. 21: 30; 30: 12; Num. 35: 31, 32; Prov. 6: 35).¹⁹ Most modern lexicographers also consider the verb *kāphar* in Gen. 6: 14 to come from a separate root, though I should think with less confidence. Even so, Dodd was not wrong to set aside this verse and thus the LXX rendering *asphaltōō*.

The only texts Dodd ignores that Nicole lists, and which might well have found a place in his section A, are Isa. 22: 14 (*aphiēmi* = *kuppar*), Isa. 27: 9 (*aphaireō* = *kuppar*), and Ex. 30: 16 (*eisphora* = *kippūrīm*). Surprisingly Nicole does not mention Isa. 6: 7 (Heb. *kuppar*); perhaps the translation of the LXX, *perikatharizō*, is too

¹⁷ R. R. Nicole, "C. H. Dodd and the Doctrine of Propitiation", *WTJ* 17 (1955), pp. 117-157.

¹⁸ *Kephārim* in Song 7: 12 could be a corruption for *Kerāmīm* as occurs in v. 13; or more likely as in Song 1: 14; 4: 13 it means, "the flower of henna" = *Kōpher* (pl. *Kephārim*); whatever, the LXX realized, as Nicole did not, that it was a different word to *kipper*.

¹⁹ *Dōron* in Job 36: 18 is similarly excluded.

close to the variants which support Dodd's thesis. Actually Nicole, despite his linguistic error,²⁰ did raise an important question, namely, can variants as diverse as *hagiazō* to *aphiēmi* really be conjoined as similar ideas?

Further, Nicole claims Dodd treats the LXX and NT as an isolated island and completely passes over Philo and Josephus, as well as the fathers. That, of course, is exactly what Dodd claims, that the LXX (and NT) is an isolated island; unique because the LXX is translating Hebrew and so forced Greek words into a new mould. This last observation also answers Nicole's complaint that Dodd does not even deal with the whole of the LXX in that he ignores the Books of Maccabees. With the exception of 1 Mac., whose Hebrew *Vorlage* is not extant, the Books of Maccabees were originally written in Greek and therefore unsuitable for Dodd's comparative method.²¹

A strong challenge is made by Nicole over whether the fact that various words are used in translating one word necessarily means that these words are synonymous. If that principle is denied, then the strength of Dodd's three culminating lines of argument is manifestly reduced. Nicole demonstrates the fragility of the assumption from modern languages. In defence of Dodd it should be pointed out that there is some reason to believe that some of his examples are synonyms and not just haphazard variants. First, there is the close association of *exilaskomai* and *katharizō* in Ex. 30: 10, Lev. 8: 15, and then the fact that Lev. 16: 20, 33 and Ezk. 43: 20, 22, 26 use *exilaskomai* for a similar Hebrew *Vorlage* to Ex. 30: 10 and 29: 33, 36 f. where *katharizō* and *hagiazō* are used. There can be no doubt that the expiation and cleansing, as well as sanctifying, of the altar or sanctuary, were ideas which belonged within a very short radius.

In conclusion it must be conceded that the arguments of Dodd drawn from the translation variants (sections A and B in his study), at best can only support a conclusion based on a study of the *hilaskomai* group as rendering *kipper*; they cannot dictate the results of this latter analysis.

IV. D. HILL

The most competent and linguistically the best qualified criticism is that made by D. Hill.²² In a work attempting to take J. Barr's

²⁰ L. Morris (*Apostolic*³, pp. 155 f.) accepts Nicole's arguments apparently oblivious of any linguistic oddity. J. Herrmann [*Die Idee der Sühne im Alten Testament* (Leipzig, 1905), p. 35] long ago warned: "Die Gleichheit der Radikale aber darf uns nicht bestimmen, hier sogleich Identität des Stammes vorauszusetzen; auf so unsicherem Boden können wir nicht bauen."

²¹ Dodd does use Sirach, for example, where the Hebrew is extant.

²² D. Hill, *Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings* (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 23-48.

principles seriously, and yet at the same time preserve the validity of a Kittel-type *Wörterbuch*,²³ he gives attention to *exilaskomai*. Hill underlines the dubious nature of drawing conclusions from translation variants, especially where the variants are so wide apart as from "sanctify" to "cancel."

Where a Greek word is used frequently to translate the one Hebrew word, the underlying Hebrew root constitutes a valuable guide to the meaning; this does not mean, however, cautions Hill, that the Hebrew words it translates on a very few occasions are a reliable clue.²⁴ In these instances context is more important, for the LXX may use a word because of the context and it becomes really a paraphrase rather than an equivalent of the actual Hebrew word. Thus Hill finds ideas of propitiation in the LXX of 2 Kings 24: 4; Zech. 7: 2; 8: 22; Mal. 1: 9; Ex. 32: 14; Ps. 106: 30; Sir. 45: 23; 1 Sam. 6: 3, where the context of the Greek itself is determinative rather than any underlying Hebrew word.²⁵

Dodd gave scant attention to the non-cultic occurrences of *kipper*, deeming them of no consequence for the cultic texts. This is denied by Hill, who maintains the non-cultic texts are the better for ascertaining the ground meaning of the word. On the basis of Gen. 32: 20; Prov. 16: 14; Ex. 32: 30; 2 Sam. 21: 1-14, Hill concludes that ideas of propitiation are present in *kipper*—and accordingly (*ex*)*ilaskomai* when translating it—in the non-cultic contexts. Within the cult Hill feels less confident and settles for a middle position which includes "ideas of expiation *and* propitiation within one act of atonement".²⁶ This formalizing of *kipper* is reflected also in (*ex*)*ilaskomai* and this semantic shift produces a meaning peculiar to biblical Greek²⁷ which, Hill suggests, can best be rendered by "atone."

Hill has succeeded in establishing that ideas of "propitiation" are not impossible for the original Hebrew; or for the Greek (*ex*)*ilaskomai* either as a translation of *kipper*; or other Hebrew words where context demands the concept of "propitiation".²⁸ He has also

²³ According to Barr he failed. See Barr's severe criticism in his review, "Common Sense and Biblical Language", *Biblica* 49 (1968), pp. 377 ff.

²⁴ *Words*, pp. 26 ff.

²⁵ The Hebrew words are *sālah*, *hillāh*, *niḥam*, *pillēl*, *yāda*'.

²⁶ *Words*, p. 36.

²⁷ This raises the old debate over the relationship of "biblical Greek" and the Greek of the surrounding world, a debate which of course is still very much with us. For the older debate cf. E. Hatch, *Essays in Biblical Greek* (Oxford, 1889), and H. A. A. Kennedy, *Sources of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh, 1895).

²⁸ T. C. G. Thornton ["Propitiation or Expiation?"], *ExT* 80 (1968-69), pp. 53-55], though accepting some of the criticisms of Dodd by Morris and Hill, accuses them of ignoring the fact that God is the active subject of the verb in Rom. 3: 25 and 1 Jn. 4: 10. Neither writer does, however, ignore that God is the subject of the action, see *Apostolic*³, p. 173; *Words*, pp. 37 f.

capped the argument against the validity of Dodd's use of translation-variants which began with Morris and Nicole. His condemnation of Dodd's making the sacred sphere primary is not above question. Ideas of appeasement may be quite acceptable in the secular realm to both the authors of the Hebrew scriptures and the translators of the LXX, but that does not mean that the same is true in the sacred sphere.²⁹

V. K. KOCH

In his unpublished Habilitationsschrift Klaus Koch³⁰ reduces the island of uniqueness from both the LXX and the NT to just the NT, maintaining that the former understood (*ex*)*ilaskomai* in its normal profane sense while only the NT preserved the expiatory ideas of the Hebrew Bible. He therefore takes issue with Dodd's study.

He names, as every critic of Dodd has, those places where the LXX undoubtedly uses *exilaskomai* in the sense of "propitiation"; Zech. 7: 2; 8: 22; Mal. 1: 9 and probably Ps. 105 (106): 30.³¹ If the usual Greek meaning can be inserted in these four places "so", says Koch, "wird es auch an anderen Stellen fraglich, ob sie den Sinn der alttestamentlichen Stellen gewahrt hat."³² That God is never otherwise in the LXX the object of (*ex*)*ilaskomai*, in contrast to the usual Greek usage, is explained to Koch's satisfaction by the Hebrew *Vorlage*.

In these four texts it should be noted that they do not translate *kipper*, and if, as Hill and others maintain, the occasional translation of other Hebrew words is not definitive for the meaning of (*ex*)*ilaskomai* when it translates *kipper*, then these examples only prove that the LXX translators knew and sometimes used the normal Greek nuance. It is a point of agreement that the Hebrew *Vorlage* exerts a changed context on the usage of (*ex*)*ilaskomai* in the LXX. What Koch does not discuss is whether these radical constructions could have been produced as mechanical translations by the scribes in blissful ignorance that they were modifying the word *exilaskomai*.

The argument of Dodd that *kipper* can sometimes be translated by Greek words like *hagiazō* or *katharizō* can, according to Koch, be turned about. These variants do not necessarily mean that, because they also render *kipper*, they are synonymous with (*ex*)*ilaskomai*: "es kann auch bedeuten, dass es den Übersetzern an diesen Stellen

²⁹ Thus Gen. 32: 20; Prov. 16: 14; 2 Sam. 21: 1-14 are dealing with men not God, though Morris makes an abortive attempt to make God the object of the verb in 2 Sam. 21, see *ExT* 62, p. 230.

³⁰ K. Koch, *Die israelitische Sühneanschauung und ihre historishcen Wandlungen* (unpublished Habilitationsschrift, Erlangen, 1956), pp. 99 ff.

³¹ S. Lyonnet (*Sin*, pp. 141 f.), tries to understand these verses as "simply praying to God or of entreating", which I find highly improbable.

³² *Sühneanschauung*, p. 101.

gerade unmöglich erschien, (*ex*)*ilaskomai* für *kipper* zu setzen".³³ In actual fact, continues Koch, one can almost always find a basis for the use of other Greek words to render *kipper*. In Exodus,³⁴ for instance, other translations occur when the object of *kipper* is "priests" or "altar"; or in Deut.³⁵ where it is a question of the expiation of the land. If this argument were cogent we would expect the LXX consistently to use some word other than (*ex*)*ilaskomai* when the object of *kipper* was priests, temple, or altar; but this is not the case. To the exceptions of Koch's "fast jedesmal" which he notes, Lev. 16: 20, 33, we may add Ezk. 43: 20, 26; 45: 20 where (*ex*)*ilaskomai*, translating *kipper*, has sanctuary or altar as the object; and as well mention the close association between *exilaskomai* and *katharizō* and *hagiazō* in Ex. 30: 10; Lev. 8: 15 and Ezk. 43: 26.

"*Hilaskomai* und seine Derivate werden im ganzen Alten Testament nicht als Wiedergabe von *kipper* benutzt, wenn Gott Subject und die Sünde Object der Sühne ist."³⁶ The inference, for Koch, is that this avoidance of using (*ex*)*ilaskomai* in such constructions of *kipper* indicates that for the translators (*ex*)*ilaskomai* was unsuitable in contexts where the meaning is expiation. Even in the non-prophetic books where *hilaskomai* is not usually replaced by an alternative Greek rendering for *kipper* when "sin" is the object, the construction is changed: instead of "die 'Sünden sühnen' sagt man 'für Sünden sühnen' (Dativ; Ps. 77, 38 vgl. 78, 9)."³⁷ Only in Ps. 64: 4, notes Koch, does *hilaskomai* appear with the accusative of sin, because, he says, on this one occasion the Hebrew is reproduced literally. So striking is this usage that later scribes changed it to the dative.³⁸ Besides these the passive is met in 1 Sam. 3: 14 with sin as subject and Sir. 3: 30 where sin is in the accusative and man is the subject.³⁹ On the whole, however, concludes Koch, "(*ex*)*ilaskomai* bedeutet für die Übersetzer der LXX nicht, dass Gott zugunsten des Menschen die Sünde beseitigt, sondern heisst (Gott) versöhnen."⁴⁰ And that, as Koch claims, is an abandonment of the essential characteristic of the OT term.

Above all, Koch finds confirmation of this in the fact that in some places the passive form is used, but only where God is subject, and

³³ *Sühneanschauung*, p. 102.

³⁴ Ex. 29: 33, 36 f.; 30: 10.

³⁵ Deut. 32: 43.

³⁶ *Sühneanschauung*, p. 102. See Isa. 6: 7; 22: 14; 27: 9; Jer. 18: 23; Dan. 9: 24.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 103. There are only two examples outside those in note 36 above, namely Ps. 64: 4 and 77: 38, of which one does retain the accusative, so Koch's point here is not strong.

³⁸ *κα* T.

³⁹ We may add to this meagre list Dan. 9: 24 (Θ), and there are six instances in Sirach where "sin" is the accusative rather than just the one that Koch mentions.

⁴⁰ *Sühneanschauung*, p. 103.

this where the Pi'el, the most active Hebrew verb-form, stands. Alternatively *hileōs ginesthai* is used (Deut. 21: 8). As man is never the subject of the passive form, Koch concludes, against Dodd, that it is improbable that the middle and passive have the same sense in the LXX.

Koch admits the LXX has not taken over the Greek idiom unchanged; there are the instances where God is made the subject of (*ex*)*ilaskomai*; also unlike the Greek term, God is conceived of as an active participant in the atonement (Psalm 64: 4; 77: 38; Ezk. 16: 63). A second important change is that now not only God, but also the altar, sanctuary, and land are atoned for through the act this word signifies.

The arguments of Koch do reveal that the LXX scribes were aware that the only appropriate direct object of (*ex*)*ilaskomai* was a person. Although they did not hesitate to have the holiest, tent of meeting, or altar as accusatives (Lev. 16: 20, 33) they generally avoided this construction where God is the subject and sin the object. It is a remarkable fact, that where *kipper* has divine subject and sin as the object: Ps. 65: 4; 78: 38; Dan. 9: 24; Jer. 18: 23; Ps. 79: 9, (Dt. 32: 43),⁴¹ Isa. 6: 7; 22: 14; 27: 9; Prov. 16: 6, the LXX mostly avoided using *exilaskomai*. The Greek words used are *apaleiphō*, *athōō*, *ekkatharizō*, *perikatharizō*, *aphiēmi*, *aphaireō*. Dodd does not mention all of these,⁴² but, when one considers the number of the texts and the extent of the avoidance of using *exilaskomai*, the more cogent explanation is that the LXX translators considered *exilaskomai* unsuitable in these contexts, rather than Dodd's thesis that the other words are but synonyms of *exilaskomai*. Pss. 64 (65): 4; 78 (79): 9; 77 (78): 38 use *hilaskomai*, but Ps. 77 uses an indirect dative object, as does 78 (79): 9 reflecting 'al; only Ps. 64 (65): 4 leaves the accusative unchanged. With the other Hebrew words which *hilaskomai* translates there is only one example of divine subject and sin as object, Ps. 24 (25): 11 *wesālahtā la'awōnī* = *hilasē tē hamartia mou*; an indirect object reflecting *le* similar to Ps. 78 (79): 9.⁴³

The Hebrew *Vorlage* caused the translators to use indirect-prepositional objects and once at least they used a dative rather than the direct object of the Hebrew (Ps. 77: 38) even though it is not

⁴¹ *wkipper 'admāthō 'āmmō*

⁴² He does not include in his section A, Isa. 6: 7; 22: 14; 27: 9. Prov. 16: 6 is untranslated by the LXX. The texts in Isaiah are all in the Pu'al, but this is no reason to ignore them.

⁴³ This rather drastically modifies the statement of V. Taylor, *The Atonement in New Testament Teaching* (London, 1940), pp. 181 f.: "in the Greek Bible, . . . the object of the verb is not God but sins". This is only true of the Psalms. Of course, denying that sins are the object of the verb does not mean that God is the object.

common in the profane literature to follow *exilaskomai* with an indirect object. The further changes in the LXX usage that Koch himself records, are so far-reaching as to answer his own question whether the translators have preserved the Hebrew meaning. The answer must be, yes, in part. Whether they intended to do so we may question, but it seems hard to believe that they could use *exilaskomai* in all the contexts they have without some awareness that the word, if given its profane meaning, would often make nonsense.⁴⁴

VI. CONCLUSION

The force of the criticisms against Dodd's article make it clear that he has over-simplified the issues and granted to the LXX translators too great a consciousness in supposedly radically modifying the use of (*ex*)*ilaskomai*. His thesis has been too quickly and uncritically accepted in Britain.⁴⁵ Dodd has ignored the context in limiting himself to a lexicographical method; he undervalues the element of wrath; treats the LXX as a translation unity and so too easily explains away any texts which are disharmonious with his thesis; too quickly dismisses the force of the passive form which may well often mean "[let yourself] be propitiated", especially as this form always has God as subject; assumes translation variants are synonyms when the reasons for variants may frequently be for other reasons.

No matter, however, how the LXX scribes construed (*ex*)*ilaskomai* in and of itself, the Hebrew constructions which they sought to translate with this word forced upon them applications of the *hilaskomai* class which were otherwise strange, not least, as even Koch concedes, where God is subject of the verb. Though it may be true that in the canonical scriptures "sin" is almost never the accusative object of (*ex*)*ilaskomai*, it is also true that God is never the object where it translates *kipper*, and that is of profound significance. Dodd may have overrated the LXX's aversion from propitiatory ideas; it would, however, be a mistake to overvalue the acceptance of them. There is abundant evidence of a change having taken place in the meaning of (*ex*)*ilaskomai* in the LXX, and in the face of lack of evidence to the contrary that translation may be credited with the initiation of the metamorphosis.⁴⁶

"Materially", in the old cult, "the effect on God could not be separated from the effect on man or his sin. The two were sought and achieved together."⁴⁷ The emphasis, we would maintain, was on the

⁴⁴ One would think that even the A.V.'s "atonement" and "propitiation" are hardly used or read with dictionary meanings in mind.

⁴⁵ And U.S.A., cf. *IDB* III, pp. 920 f.

⁴⁶ Sirach tends towards an even clearer use of (*ex*)*ilaskomai* with sin as object.

⁴⁷ F. Büchsel, *TDNT* III, p. 316.

removal of sin, and the initiative of God in this purgation, though only a glimmer in the OT cult, becomes a burning light in the gospel of Christ, as Büchsel observes:

The most striking thing about the development of the terms, however, is that words which were originally used to denote man's action in relation to God cease to be used in this way in the NT and are used instead of God's action in relation to man.⁴⁸

Or, as Moule more graphically puts it, "the root *hilask* is notoriously stood on its head by the New Testament".⁴⁹

The debate over the translation of *hilaskomai* is in some ways sterile, simply because the proffered alternatives both need to be understood in ways other than their dictionary meanings. If we use "expiation" we must enrich it to include the idea that the cancelling of sin also causes the God-willed effect—which the NT calls *orgē*—to cease, and at the same time introduces the forgiven sinner to a new relationship with God. The word must be somewhat personalized, even "stood on its head". If one advocates "propitiation", the word must be radically applied in the first instance to the removal of pollution and only secondarily to the cessation of wrath. The initiative of God in this action must be jealously preserved and all intimations of the grotesque notion of God propitiating himself, or his justice, banished. The love of God revealed in the saving event of the Cross must dominate in our understanding of *hilaskomai*, no matter what English word we choose to baptize into the impossible task of conveying all the concepts attached to this semantically rich word.

Avondale College,
Cooranbong, N.S.W.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 317. As K. Koch says (*Sühneanschauung*, p. 99), when the words speak of God, "bei *kipper* ist Gott (stets logisches) Subject, bei *hilaskomai* (stets logisches) Object."

⁴⁹ C. F. D. Moule, *SEA* 30, p. 24.