SOME THOUGHTS ON THE BURNT OFFERING.

By A. J. Marks.

G. Morrish, 20, Paternoster Square, London, E.C.4. Made and Printed in England.

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE BURNT OFFERING.

(LEV. I.)

No one can read the Old Testament without noticing how often the Spirit of God speaks of the burnt offering; and while other offerings are directly connected with it, they are always subordinated to it. Indeed, the burnt offering is mentioned almost as frequently as the occurrences of the meat offering, drink offering,

and sin offering all put together.

How far the faith of the Old Testament saints entered into an appreciation of all that the burnt offering pointed on to, we cannot tell, but that the Lord God instructed Adam and Eve beyond the words recorded in Genesis iii. I think we may justly gather from the com-munion existing between the Lord God and Adam as evidenced in Genesis ii. And that when He made "coats of skins" something of the import was unfolded, before in righteous government they were driven out of the garden. Else what hope could Adam have had to sustain him for nine hundred and thirty years, or whence the intelligence that enabled Abel to approach with the consciousness of communion maintained, by his offering "of the firstlings of his flock and the fat thereof "? So before we consider Leviticus i.

we must just look at the previous notices of the burnt offering.

Adam and Eve sought to meet the condition their disobedience had brought in by resort to fig leaves, or what man could do for himself, so God uses the fig tree as a type of Israel's responsibility, and in John i. we find Nathanael called from his shelter "under the fig tree" into the light of the Son of God-the Word become flesh. Later when the nation had been fully tested by the Lord's own ministry, and at the close of His pathway there had been no response, but opposition and hatred, the fig tree is cursed and "dried up from the roots." (Matt. xxi. and Mark xi.) On the other hand, God's answer to the efforts made by our first parents, was the bringing in of the burnt offering, foreshadowed in the "coats of skins," and His final answer to man's failure in responsibility is Christ in resurrection. The completion of the divine purpose in recovery is presented at the outset. It is in this activity on the part of the Lord God in Genesis iii. that is given the first intimation of the burnt offering as the way in which He would take up the question of man's sin and its consequences and provide a covering for the nakedness brought about by sin; for we are told in the law of the offerings that the priest is to have the skin of the burnt offering for himself. (Lev. vii. 8.) However, it is in Genesis viii. 20 that the burnt offering is first so termed, and the name occurs seven times in the book. In that verse it comes before us as Noah's apprehension of how the new world could

come into being, and it is in the light of that burnt offering the covenant between "God and every living creature for perpetual generations" was made (chap. ix. 12), so that this world has been and yet is allowed to go on. The next and last occurrence in Genesis is Abraham's preparing to offer up Isaac (chap. xxii.), in which both the lamb and the ram are mentioned. These instances find their complement in the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ as portrayed in the Gospel of John. How marvellously does Genesis xxii. illustrate the Father and the Son moving on in perfect unison to accomplish the purpose of His love. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son."

Dimly outlined it may be in Genesis, but

how exact as far as the illustration could go: "Thine only son whom thou lovest" (the first time in scripture that the word "love" is used). Then "they went both of them together," the servants left behind, by themselves apart from human eye; then "the altar and the wood in order" and the burnt offering; literally, of course, not Isaac, but a divinely secured victim. Now we, in the light of the reality, know that the Son has drunk the cup from the Father's hand (John xviii. 11), that He Himself, God in Person, having borne the full weight of divine judgment, has exhausted the fire, and having said, "It is finished...he bowed his head," and passed into the penalty of death itself, beyond which the type could not go. Think too of the perfection of accord in mind and heart and purpose, so that He could say, "the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him." (Chap. viii. 29.) All this is involved in the burnt offering, where intrinsic perfection was appreciated by and was pleasurable to God, so that it could wholly ascend to Him as a sweet savour, while the result only—the skin—is left for us.

The term burnt offering does not adequately convey the thought and point, for its Hebrew name is literally "that which goes up," or is caused to ascend by the fire, because it was the only offering that was wholly burnt or went up to Jehovah; not burnt or consumed as the sin offering, or burnt like incense, but as caused to go up and so "offered," the noun and the verb being cognate. It is just this aspect which finds its antitype in John's gospel, "The Father loveth the Son," "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," and, finally, "It is finished."

In Exodus xxix. are given the first particular instructions as to the burnt offering, and that in connection with the consecration or "filling the hand" (see margin) of the priest, followed immediately by the ordinance of the "continual burnt offering" (ver. 42) of the morning and evening lamb day by day. All in view of its being possible for God to "dwell among the children of Israel and be their God" (ver. 45) during the day of responsibility or from morning to evening. (John xi. 9; Psa. civ. 23.) "The evening and the morning" of Genesis i. is the way God has worked to bring to pass His purposes, but from morning to evening is

rather man's day, and how His people may live in the light of "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." It was on the ground of that sacrifice, "with its meat offering and its drink offering, for a sweet savour" (ver. 41), that Jehovah could meet with the people and that communion was maintained. A lamb of one year gives the idea of unchanging freshness and vigour, and the thought too in its repetition of the unassailable righteousness of the foundation for God's attitude of grace.

The burnt offering forms the basis of God's ways with His people all through the Old Testament from the moment that sin came into the world up to the end of 2 Chronicles, which closes the canon of the Hebrew Bible. Now though we must turn to Leviticus to find the material instruction as to the burnt offering, we must ever remember that it was not till after His resurrection that the Lord opened the understanding of His disciples that they might understand the scriptures and how it behoved the Christ to suffer. So for us who have the Spirit there is ability to enter into the beautiful suggestiveness of the details of the Levitical ritual. To us they are no longer prospective and pointing on to the coming One, but we look back and see how all has found a perfect answer and fulfilment in the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Book of Exodus closes with the tabernacle reared up on the first day of the first month of the second year, and then at once Jehovah calls to Moses out of the tabernacle and speaks to him in detail of the behaviour incumbent on the people recognising His presence and desiring to approach Him. This is the Book of Leviticus, and just as in Exodus after He had brought them out of Egypt through the Red Sea and given them the covenant, He began from His own side by speaking of the ark first in the instructions as to the tabernacle, so again He starts from His own side and speaks first of the burnt offering in Leviticus i. and shews how through the burnt offering we may draw near.

the burnt offering we may draw near.

The question now is, What is the significance of the burnt offering? Primarily, it sets forth the whole position between God and man, man having fallen; and in the slaying of the victim, death as God's judgment on sin, which brought in the distance, is acknowledged. It recognises the fact of a distance existing between God and the offerer, but fills it for God and for the one who approaches with the sweet odour of the ascending offering. In it

is involved all the other offerings.

In Exodus the burnt offering is given in connection with the establishment of the system, but in our chapter it is spoken of entirely in connection with the worshipper. From the point of view of a soul who would draw near to God with a sense of His righteousness and holiness and glory, and yet in virtue of the sacrifice, he is "accepted." "Of his own voluntary will" (ver. 3) is correct in the spirit of its being a wholly voluntary act, but accurately rendered, it should read, "for his

acceptance," as the verb is so translated in the next verse—"it shall be accepted for him," or he shall be taken into favour. In New

Testament language the Spirit can speak of "the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved." (Eph. i. 6.)

The offerer, the one who would come near, for that is the force of the word, by placing his hand on the head of the bullock, typifies his identification, in intelligence, with the victim, which he then slays as owning what is due to himself. But the blood, which is the evidence of the life given up, he cannot touch; the priest alone can deal with that, who sprinkles it about the altar which is at the door of the tent of meeting (ver. 5), signifying that the way into God's presence has been opened. The skin is next taken off-all its opened. The skin is next taken off—all its outward distinctive beauty—and becomes the priest's—we are "blessed in him." (Psa. lxxii. 17; Eph. i. 3.) Then the parts, the head and the fat—the intelligence and the energy—placed in order on the wood, symbol of the humanity of our Lord, as well as the fact of the cross; also the ordered way in which every letter of the parintense was fallelled. letter of the scriptures was fulfilled. The inwards and the legs are washed in water— no taint or soil of earthliness to mar the affections or cleave to Him from the path He trod, and in result all caused to go up by the action of the fire, symbol of the searching judgment of God. We to-day, in the light of Christ, can see how the type would suggest to the soul of him who drew near, a deep sense of the unblemished qualities of the One yet to

come. He would have on the one hand a sense of the perfection of Him who could be a vicarious sacrifice, "it shall be accepted for him," "it" "for him" (ver. 4); and on the other hand God's full answer in the skin. For in Christianity the offerer and the priest coalesce.

The fire was ever burning on that altar, it was never to go out (chap. vi. 13), for God's judgment on sin ever abides, it can never be lost sight of, though a way was made then in type, but now it is actual, for coming into His presence. "Through him we both [Jew and Gentile] have access by one Spirit to the Father." (Eph. ii. 18.) All the "parts" or "pieces" are burned on the altar, or strictly speaking, burned as incense by the priest, and in its totality it is regarded in the full distinctive character of a "burnt sacrifice" or offering, that which wholly goes up "to Jehovah as a sweet savour." (Ver. 9.) "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again." (John x. 17.)

There can be no doubt but that this is the supreme type of our Lord Jesus Christ as the "mediator between God and men . . . who gave himself a ransom for all." (1 Tim. ii, 5.)

Seeing there are different measures of apprehension, both of the position and of Christ Himself, three kinds of burnt offerings are described. Like the three stages of growth marked in 1 John ii., fathers, young men, and little children, so here there is a bullock, a sheep or a goat, and a turtle dove or young

pigeon—the bullock as the largest of domesticated and clean animals, suggesting the mesticated and clean animals, suggesting the greatest degree of apprehension; the sheep or goat equally complete and perfect in itself, though of smaller size, a lesser degree, and last the bird which is "not to be divided asunder" (ver. 17), as if indicating the smallest degree of which grace could take account, as of those "six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand." (Jonah iv. 11.)

So that while the chapter is profound enough, yet the grace of it includes the feeblest and least developed, for the concluding words to each of the three sections—"a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire of a sweet savour unto the Lord"—are identical. The words, "a sweet savour," take us back to the first mention of the burnt offering in Genesis viii. 20, where the margin accurately reads, "a savour of rest;" a most beautiful thought, because the burnt offering was never anything less to God than a means darkly shadowed forth of how He would reach, not a sabbath or rest from labour, but a rest or unruffled calm of quietude in satisfaction and complacency—the "rest" of Psalm xev. 11—rest in One who in manhood perfectly answered to and satisfied every desire of the heart and mind of the Father—"my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Unquestionably scripture teaches us that the material creation, Nature, as we speak, has been designed in such a way as to convey spiritual lessons to our souls; for example,

the light of the morning after the darkness of the night—the bursting into life of the spring after the death of winter, both speak of the glory of resurrection. Because God who knows "the end from the beginning" (Isa. xlvi. 10) brought the present order of things into existence as a platform on which to solve the question of good and evil, to test His creature man made in the image and likeness of God, and in view of his fall to bring in Christ's sacrifice and work in accordance with the counsels of eternity, when He said, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me. I delight to do thy will, O my God." (Psa. xl. 7, 8.) There would have been no need for the offerings but for the love of God on the one hand, and sin and its judgment of death on the other. They each set forth traits of Christ and His work in one aspect or another, with the burnt offering in the chief place, the type of the One who alone could meet all that was due to God, and as man walked here among and with men, unspotted by the evil, in absolute perfection under the eye of God. In the burnt offering it is not sins or guiltiness that is in view so much as the situation as a whole—man at a distance from God and under death. this Christ comes in in such intrinsic perfection that even the priest could have no portion of the burnt offering, but all goes up to God, who alone can appreciate in its fulness the sweet savour brought out by the fire. The skin, however, remains, so that a covering is provided through the death of the victim in contrast to the nakedness brought in by sin.

In the bullock we may see, as an animal of the earth, figure of His humanity, characteris-tics which marked His pathway—a quiet, steady movement in persistent patience and obedience, or in the lamb a quiet inoffensive and unoffending dependence. A victim aland unonending dependence. A victim altogether outside of and unchargeable with the offence, how truly has He restored that which He took not away! (Psa. lxix. 4.) For "He knew no sin" (2 Cor. v. 21), "He did no sin" (1 Peter ii. 22), and "In him is no sin." (1 John iii. 5.) Marvellous perfection of the One who came into this scene and taking the body prepared for Him, in holy manhood walked a pathway here subjected to every kind of testing from Satan, who brought all his power to bear upon Him, and also from the enmity and perversity of men; and having proved His fitness to become the Victim, at the last from the hand of God according to Psalms xxii., lxix., cii., He then went into the penalty of death itself, completing the sacrifice, but on account of His inherent glory and the power of life, for "in him was life"—only of a Person divine in nature could this be said (John i. 4)—has He come forth in resurrection, the Head and Centre of a new world. It was not possible that He could have been holden of death. (Acts ii. 24.)

Of necessity the offerings in themselves are very limited and cannot go so far as this, and, too, our minds are finite, therefore unable to grasp more than a little at a time. So the grace of that wonderful appeal to Israel in Isaiah xxviii., "line upon line; here a little, and there a little." In that way the blessed God unfolded to the believer under the old covenant how he might reach an understanding and a sense of clearance from sin and guilt and have a conscience purged for the time being through the death of another. In contrast to this, we, in the light of the new covenant, * have the realisation by the witness of the Spirit, that by the "one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb. x. 1–15.) Leviticus has the "shadow" of which we have the reality and substance in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The only figure of resurrection is, I suppose, the wave sheaf in Leviticus xxiii., although the thought or faith of it is in Genesis xxii., as the Holy Spirit shews when He comments on Abraham's act in Hebrews xi. 19; for in Genesis is to be found the germ of everything which in the rest of scripture is developed or revealed.

The very name of Leviticus in the original is expressive of the grace of God, for it is the "call" of Jehovah (ver. 1) from His dwelling-place, or invitation to "any man" to "draw near." And He takes into account our weakness by speaking of the three kinds of burnt offering, which, as already noticed, find a reflection in John's epistle; still this in no wise contemplates stagnation, but as the Spirit desires in Hebrews vi. 1 (our Leviticus) we should "go on to perfection" or full growth.

^{*} In scripture the words "covenant" and "testament" are synonymous.

Thus how great is the encouragement for the simplest and youngest in the assembly to "draw near" in worship. Because whether it be on their part the bullock or the bird. for God there is the "sweet savour." At the same time nature does not countenance a "babe" remaining such, but teaches growth, so may there be with us "purpose of heart" and progress in spiritual things. The apostle desired it for the saints at Corinth (chap. iii.) and rejoiced as he saw movement in them when he wrote the second letter. (Chap. vii.) Therefore may the material regulations given by God with regard to the burnt offering under the old covenant greatly help to instruct in, as well as illustrate to us by type and contrast, the spiritual "liberty" of the new. Then, the worshipper could not pass beyond "the door," although he came away with the knowledge that atonement had been made for him, but now "by the blood of Jesus," we have "liberty" to pass into the holiest itself. By that blood-shedding He has "established" the new covenant, and Christianity is nothing less than to behold His glory with "unveiled face." (2 Cor. iii. 18.) By the blood of the sacrifices under the old covenant there was typically acceptance and atonement or covering. but for us in the light of the new covenant and the blood of Jesus, there is acceptance absolute, eternal—and reconciliation. However, that goes beyond this paper.

Meanwhile may the Lord grant to each of us a deep consciousness in the Spirit's power of a God-provided covering instead of the nakedness which is the consequence of sin, and equally may there be the response from us in the bearing the character of another order of man and the being marked by the moral qualities of Him who has been raised from the dead.

Ilford.

ARTHUR J. MARKS.