

THE SIN AND TRESPASS OFFERINGS.

(LEV. IV.—VII.)

WHEN we see that universally there is a recognition by the human race of distance from God and sin on our part, by the various efforts made to propitiate Him throughout all time from Cain downwards, it surely behoves us to consider what God Himself has said with regard to the situation and how He has dealt with it. In reading the Pentateuch one cannot help noticing that immediately the type of redemption in Exodus is passed and "the dwelling place" of God in the tabernacle is erected, God calls from out of it and gives directions to Moses as to the manner in which He may be approached. Death having come in as God's righteous judgment on sin cannot be ignored, but in the wisdom of His love He devises a plan whereby use is made of it as the type of His righteousness vindicated in the death of a spotless victim and at the same time as becoming a way of deliverance for the believer. (Rom. iii. 26.)

So turning to Leviticus, we find the first portion (chaps. i.–vii.) brings before our attention the offerings and the laws relating to them in a general way, in sections divided by the formula, “And Jehovah spake unto Moses.” Four sections are occupied with the offerings themselves and five with the laws.

As we have seen in a previous paper, God speaking from His own side shews us what is suitable to His righteousness and holiness in the one drawing near. The burnt offering therefore comes first, as the basis of all else, figure of Christ’s absolute devotion of obedience to the will of God even to death, and wholly ascending to God, as fully valued by Him alone. The meat offering of fine flour, oil and frankincense sets forth the unvarying evenness (John viii. 25) and the holy character of His perfection in manhood energised by the Spirit and tested in every possible way in His path here. This offering, after the memorial with *all* the frankincense had been burnt as a sweet savour, provided food for Aaron and his sons.

Then the peace offering is of wider scope, and might be a male or female from the herd or

flock, which becomes the ground of communion, because the offerer as well as the priest and his household could partake, after the blood had been sprinkled on the altar and Jehovah's portion had been burnt for a sweet savour, suggesting the idea of fellowship in the appreciation of Christ and the joy that leads to worship. These three characteristically "sweet savour offerings" form one section, in the first and third of which the offerer placing or pressing his hand upon the head of the victim becomes identified with the acceptability of the victim. On the other hand we are shewn in the sin and trespass offerings, contained in the other three sections, how the victim becomes identified with the sin or trespass of the offerer, and is treated accordingly.

While the first three speak of the death of Christ for the glory of God, these two speak of the way in which He has taken up our need and state, even to an identification so absolute and complete as to be beyond the compass of our minds, though stated in the apostle's words, "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." (2 Cor. v. 21.)

This in its fulness is more particularly set out in the sin offerings on the great day of atonement. (Chap. xvi.)

Exodus, on the one hand, presents how God saw and heard, and came down to deliver, but Leviticus, on the other, is our response figuratively in worshipful appreciation of the One in whom God's glory has been completely met and of the manner in which He has dealt with such material as ourselves. So I have said these seven chapters present the sacrifices in a general way, because particular occasions modify their uses, as in the consecration of the priests, the day of atonement and the red heifer.

But to start at the beginning: what more positive evidence could there be of the character of the blessed God than is given in the opening chapters of the first book of the Bible? A book which has survived all the destructive opposition of the political and ecclesiastical powers of the world, as well as the assaults of the human mind. Whilst telling us how sin came into this world, how intensely interesting it is to see that at once is brought into view the burnt offering, by which Abel could draw

near to God; and then to Cain, who had not realised the terrible meaning of death, God Himself becomes evangelist and points out that a sin offering lay at the door, that it was within his reach and at his disposal. This makes the rest of the verse intelligible, "unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him," or it. (Gen. iv. 7.) I admit this is obscured in our Authorised Version, the translators not catching the idea, but the fact remains that under God's overruling providence, the language in which the revelation of the Old Testament was made had its peculiarities, and one of them is, that one word and one only stands for sin offering or for sin, חַטָּאת . Therefore, though "sin lieth at the door" is not incorrect, I have no doubt "a sin offering" would be the better translation and more according to the context. By there being but the one word, we are taught how very intimately connected is sin and the sin offering, and from the very first how they have been identified in the mind of God. In a similar way is it true also of trespass and trespass offering, עֲוֹן , for which there is but one and the same word, to

be decided by the context for its translation.

And this identification in terms of sin with the sin offering and of trespass with the trespass offering, will help us to understand and to enter into the depths of the work of Christ. Not only as the victim in a sacrificial manner did he "bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Peter ii. 24), and suffer the judgment of every detail of imperfection in man, consequent upon Adam's disobedience when he ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, but He entered into every individual case, making it His own, as is typified by the priest eating part of a person's sin and trespass offering. Then, deeper still, "being made sin," according to Paul, He is able to take sin out of the universe, according to John, by becoming the "Lamb of God." (Chap. i. 29.)

For God on the divine side the work itself is done, "It is finished," and He has passed into death; all that order and condition has gone under God's judgment: nor could the type go beyond this, the victim as such is not revived, but seeing who He is, in Per-

son, He has come forth in resurrection and opened to *faith* a world where all is according to God and where all is beyond the reach of the enemy's power. As we contemplate the God-given shadows, how magnificently grand does the substance become as He stands before us in holy exaltation !

Taken together as a whole, the offerings set forth in type that the Lord Jesus has taken up and answered to both positions ; the question of distance and of sin has been dealt with, entered into by Himself from every point of view. God is glorified and man's need met. Truly He has loved God with all His heart and soul and mind, and His neighbour as Himself.

Before we look at the mode of dealing with the sin and trespass offerings in detail, there is further instruction to see that the verb translated " to sin " means primarily, in both Hebrew and Greek, to miss the mark, to err, and so to disobey, and this is doubtless referred to in the apostle's sentence, " All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. iii. 23.) In the word for " trespass " underlies the thought of guilt, and the verb is

so translated in chapter iv. 13, and frequently, and thus is what a man can take account of in his responsibility, whether towards God or towards his brother. Sin is Godward and is essentially lawlessness, as 1 John iii. 4 should read. (We can easily see it is not "transgression of the law," because "by one man [Adam] sin entered into the world" (Rom. v. 12), and the law was not "given by Moses" (John i. 17) till some two thousand five hundred years after.) Trespass is manward also. Still the two and their offerings from the beginning are intimately connected; even in Genesis iii. and iv. we learn that when man had sinned against God, he soon trespassed against his brother. The principle of lawlessness in us works in both directions.

These two offerings, closely linked as they are, though at the same time carefully distinguished—indeed, there is but "one law" for them (chap. vii. 7)—in a peculiar way let us into the secret of the heart of God. While they recognise the possibility of the principle of sin becoming active, it is most beautiful to notice God assumes the act to be one of "ignorance," or inadvertence

("unawares," as translated in Numbers xxxv. 11), "against any of the commandments of Jehovah," and not of will—"love thinketh no evil." (1 Cor. xiii. 5.) And so at the end when the supreme sacrifice was being made, towards which all others pointed, He could say, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Luke xxiii. 34.) Nevertheless, though grace could speak in this way, in righteousness a sin offering was called for, because ignorance does not absolve from responsibility. Weakness is taken into account and full provision made for it in the two offerings, but for presumption or will there is no mercy, as Numbers xv. 30 and Deuteronomy xvii. 2 make clear; and so is the interpretation by the Spirit in Hebrews x. 28.

By the sin offering provision is made in the first place to restore the communion between God and His people, which might through inadvertence, or something being done "which ought not to be done," have been broken. For the priest or the whole people a bullock, a victim not chargeable with the offence, was to be killed in the presence of Jehovah and the blood sprinkled seven times in the pre-

sence of Jehovah before the veil, the evidence that death had taken place. Then some was put upon the horns of the altar of incense and all poured out at the bottom of the altar of burnt offering, and all the fat and the kidneys burnt as a sweet savour, but the whole bullock was carried forth and burned or consumed "without the camp." "It is a sin offering." In the second place, for the individual the sin offering could be varied according to the person's ability, and the blood put upon the horns of the altar of burnt offering only, and then all poured out at the bottom of the altar and all the fat burnt, but of the flesh the priest who offered it was to eat his part. Atonement was made and the offerer cleared from his sin—that is the force of "concerning" in chapters iv. 26 and v. 6 and 10.

In a similar way was the trespass offering treated by the priest, though this was for a person or "soul" who had acted unfaithfully or harmfully, for that is the meaning of "commit a trespass" (chaps. v. 15 and vi. 2), whether "in the holy things of Jehovah" or in the things of his neighbour; this latter, too, is reckoned as "against Jehovah." But

the trespass offering could be in one kind only, "a ram without blemish"—no gradations as was allowed in the sin offering, "from a male goat to a female lamb or two birds, even to a tenth part of an ephah of flour," the smallest recognition of the will of God. A ram alone could meet the case, a ram which would typify the vigour of maturity coupled with dignified strength and with the beauty of its horns, surely a fit figure of the One who could meet all the power of evil and the malice of men which culminated at the cross. How wonderful is the love that could identify itself with what we were, even to being "made sin," and bearing all its judgment—for sin as such could not be forgiven—in order that we might be identified in righteousness with Him, the risen Man after a new order. "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." (Heb. ii. 11.)

May not this be God's answer to Cain's high-handed question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" For seeing our Lord Jesus Christ became man's neighbour, brother in that sense, and was treated by man just as Cain killed Abel, no other offering would have

been so appropriate. Also in the ordering of the offering we can understand the prophetic words, "then I restored that which I took not away" of Psalm lxi., following Psalm lxviii., speaking of His leading captivity captive, and receiving gifts for men (in the man), which the Apostle Paul refers to the exaltation of Christ and His giving gifts to men. (Eph. iv.) In this way He has truly restored it in the principal and added the fifth part more thereto. (Chap. vi. 5.) Will it not yet be true as well in the opposite way, that the nation first and all mankind will render to Him what they disallowed then and will gladly add a voice of praise and worship far beyond the claim made, when in fulfilment of Zechariah's prophecy He rode into Jerusalem (Matt. xxi.) and the multitudes cried, "Hosanna to the son of David"? That claim to the kingdom then made in "meekness" and rejected by the leaders of the people in man's responsibility, will soon be asserted in power and glory, but on the ground of an accomplished redemption.

Again, the connection between these two offerings is recognised in the confession of

Isaiah liii. to be taken up by the remnant in the day to come when they will use both the terms—trespass offering in verse 10 (translated “offering for sin”) and in verse 12 the “sin of many.” As also is there the link in this section of Leviticus where we read in chapter iv. 3, “If the priest . . . sin according to the trespass of the people,” and in chapter v. 6, “his trespass offering . . . for his sin,” and verse 7, “his trespass which he hath sinned.” (New Trans.) It is significant that also in the New Testament the Spirit of God maintains the link by using the equivalent phrase “for sin” or “sin offering” in such passages as John viii. 46 and Romans viii. 3, or Hebrews x. 6 and 26.

With these thoughts in mind we can readily see why of each the Spirit of God says twice, “it is most holy,” in the section of the laws. Of the meat offering only is this also twice said, and of it intrinsically in chapter ii., while the three are classed together as “most holy” in chapter vi. 17—a seven times repeated formula in this first portion of the book. That which in type set forth Christ as touching sin (He touched the leper) and the means

whereby the distance was removed, is all "most holy," so in a particular way do these three offerings, the meat offering and the sin and trespass offerings, form the basis of the three synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, but in reverse order. They shew how God has reached us where we were, so specifically taught in that marvellously beautiful parable in Luke x., where of "a certain Samaritan" it says, he "came where he was"; that perfect humanity typified in the meat offering thus becoming man's neighbour in divine reality. But then this necessitated His becoming the antitype to both the trespass offering and the sin offering, because the question of man's state as a sinner and the root of sin which constituted man a sinner could not be passed by. Therefore Matthew and Mark must come first in the order. So in Matthew the Lord answers primarily to the trespass offering as coming to "save his people from their sins" and the teaching is of forgiveness of the brother (Matt. v. 24 or vi. 14), and pointedly in the parable of forgiveness peculiar to that gospel in chapter xviii., and lastly in connection with the cup in the words

“remission of sins.” (Chap. xxvi. 28.) In Mark wider ground is occupied and answers rather to the sin offering in its deepest sense. He alone records the two miracles of chapters vii. and viii., first a man deaf and imperfect in speech, one whose ears sin had stopped and therefore who was unable to speak aright ; and secondly a man blind, sin in its full consequence. Both these men are taken by the Lord apart from their surroundings, whether the multitude or the town, either suited to man’s condition. And then He *touches* them, and by the two subsequent steps with each, figures of His death and resurrection, He leads them into the perfect liberty of full salvation. Thus in Mark the world comes into view, with a glad tidings to be preached to all the creation. Now we can understand that equally in Matthew and Mark where the Lord is presented as antitype to the victim and its identification with what passes from the offerer to itself, He is found in the place (not garden) “called Gethsemane” and Psalm xxii. is quoted, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?”—vicarious suffering—“made sin.” Then, in seeing Luke answers to the meat and peace offerings and

John to the burnt offering, we are taught how the soul in approaching God moves in the reverse order to that in which the revelation was made in Leviticus. Under the old covenant God starts from His own side, but in the grace of Christianity He has come down to and starts, as it were, from where man is, in order that, as Peter says, we might be brought to Himself, Christ having "suffered for sins," as well as having borne "our sins in his own body on the tree."

If we look now at a few details of the type, I think they will afford great help in grasping the scope and purport of the gospels of Matthew and Mark. In the first place the trespass offering was to be killed where the burnt offering was killed (chap. vii. 2), they were identified in death, and similarly the sin offering (chap. vi. 25), that is, on the side of the altar northward, the direction from which God's judgment is represented as coming. (Jer. iv. 6, and other passages.) Then the blood was sprinkled by the priest seven times before Jehovah as complete witness that death had come in, and put either upon the horns of the altar of incense for restoration of com-

munion in the case of the congregation, or upon the horns of the altar of burnt offering in the case of the individual, but the rest was "all poured out at the *bottom* of the altar of burnt offering"—in New Testament language "the lower parts of the earth" (Eph. iv. 9), the foundations reached, and in Old Testament words, "the dust of death" of Psalm xxii. and "He hath poured out his soul unto death" of Isaiah liii. 12, signifying that nothing was overlooked, but that forgiveness was based on righteousness—grace reigning through righteousness being the character of the present dispensation. In the burnt offering and peace offering the blood was "sprinkled round about upon the altar" only.

Next, the gradations permitted in the sin offering mark "the riches of his grace," from a bullock for the whole congregation; but for the individual a male of the goats to a female lamb or two birds, even down to a tenth part of an ephah of flour, each stamped by the formula eight times repeated, "it shall be forgiven him," or remitted. So in the three gospels we have eight times, "Thy sins are forgiven" or remitted (remission and

forgiveness being the same word in the original), but under law, "it" only. Now in the day of grace the proclamation is "remission of sins."

If the symbol seven is a sign of what is complete or finished, perfection in that sense, eight is just beyond and suggests the beginning of a new day, as for the soul whose sins are remitted, or for the eight persons who out of the ark stepped on to a new and cleansed earth untainted by sin. This leads us on to the full aspect of the sin offering on the great day of atonement (chap. xvi.), foreshadowed in the bullock for the priest or the congregation of chapter iv. 1-21. The day of atonement goes deeper and takes in the whole position between Jehovah and the people, so then the blood was taken right into the holiest and sprinkled "upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat . . . seven times" (ver. 14), and the whole body burned, consumed with fire "without the camp." Also on that day there was the further sin offering of the two goats, one for Jehovah and one for the scape-goat, to set forth another aspect of the death of Christ. The goat for Jehovah, like the

bullock, was treated as a sin offering in its most comprehensive sense, its blood sprinkled upon and before the mercy seat, and then equally burned "without the camp," coupled with the scapegoat, which after Aaron had laid both his hands upon its head and confessed all the iniquities, transgressions and sins of the people, putting them upon the head of the goat, was sent away "by the hand of a fit man . . . unto a land not inhabited." This "once a year" (ver. 34) laid the foundation in righteousness, typically, and shewed how it was possible for Jehovah to maintain relationship with the erring people as well as how, in connection with a particular sin and sin offering, the offerer could know "it shall be forgiven him." The "sending away" is exactly the thought expressed in the word translated forgiveness or remission in the New Testament, and teaches us so simply that "their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. x. 17), realised and enjoyed by us as Christians because the blood of Christ, Him who is the antitype of all the offerings, has been shed, having offered Himself by the eternal Spirit spotless to God and having

“suffered without the gate,” (Heb. xiii. 12.) In that “year by year” there was a continuous repetition of the sacrifices as a “remembrance” or calling to mind of sins every year (chap. x. 3), but now our High Priest having “offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.” (Ver. 12.)

How grand the triumph! How complete in every particular the finished work! No wonder that saint, Paul, the bondman of Jesus Christ, who I suppose appreciated and knew the love of Christ more deeply than any one of us, speaks at the end of his pathway so freely of joy and peace. (Phil. iv.)

Perhaps this is the reason why the reality of His manhood is emphasised in Matthew and Mark by their reference to the “brothers and sisters,” and the latter recording He was “the carpenter.” (Mark vi. 3.) Cain’s thought, really man’s, is just the opposite to the love manifested in Christ, who became man’s neighbour so absolutely as to take his condition of flesh and blood—apart from sin (Heb. ii.) (identification according to the type we have considered), so as to bear the

full judgment, and then in resurrection on the other side of death, to bring into view the brethren—a fit object for His love. Himself of necessity has the pre-eminent place—still “Firstborn among many brethren.” How reverently in the ritual of the old covenant is portrayed the deep spiritual reality of the apostle’s doctrine that He who knew no sin was made sin on our behalf. The type could go no further than death, but when “the blood of Christ” came under God’s eye, the One upon whom death had no claim, the redemption is “eternal”—no longer a “purifying of the flesh,” but a “purged conscience.” Not now the holy of holies, but into heaven itself has He entered as the risen Man, and that “for us” (Heb. ix. 24), having put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Sin, which in itself is lawlessness, is beyond the estimation of the creature, but a trespass and its offering could be valued so that a fifth part might be added in the making “amends,” but to Jehovah the offering was *always* a ram. Even David had to say, “I have sinned,” and the Nazarite might become liable for a trespass offering. Should not these

considerations therefore greatly enhance in our minds the love that could stoop to such a depth and accomplish such a redemption, "that which is in Christ Jesus," delivering us from the consequences of a condition marked by sin and trespass? If a saint under the old covenant reached the conscious joy of apprehending the teaching of the sacrifices and realised the atonement effected, so that he could say, "Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back" (Isa. xxxviii. 17), what ought to be the measure of *our* joy and peace and the overflow of worship to our God and Father?—we, who are in the light of the resurrection and have had the ministry of the new covenant and of reconciliation.

May every reader have a deeper consciousness of the positive character of Christianity, and thus realise that there is no adverse power able to separate us "from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. viii. 39.)

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