

THE CONSECRATION OFFERING.

(EXO. XXIX. ; LEV. VIII.)

To take notice of the order in which the subjects are introduced, as well as the setting in which they are placed, is of the greatest help in reading the Bible. In each book there is an orderly and distinctive presentation of the truth. In scripture there is no mere repetition. The same incident, parable, or miracle may be spoken of twice or more, but from a different point of view and with a different lesson to be learnt. What is according to the mind of God is first set out in perfection, though quickly marred by failure in man's responsibility, thus manifesting the weakness of the flesh. For instance, at the very beginning, when the primal creation left the Creator's hand in all its beauty and blessedness, our first parents allowed the tempter's question to sway their hearts, and sin and death spoiled all. Again, when Christianity was established by the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit, the lie and hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira broke in upon the unity and transparency of the saints, and from the consequences we have never re-

covered. So, too, was it the case when the priesthood was set up ; two of them, Nadab and Abihu, so little grasped its meaning that they offered strange fire, and brought upon themselves summary judgment.

It is with this Aaronic priesthood I desire now to occupy your attention ; for the fact of sin being in the world, with man a sinner and the reign of death, called in question the power of God, and indeed His nature. How would He meet the situation ? In wondrous mercy and wisdom, by means of a sacrificial and typical system, and at last “when the fulness of time was come” (Gal. iv. 4) by the actual sacrifice of Christ Himself—the culmination and fulfilment of all the types. The righteousness and holiness of His throne conciliated with His nature—love, for “God is love.” Divine love has been demonstrated.

In the Book of Genesis is revealed the beginning of “all things,” and of the present creation, and while on the whole God allowed mankind in responsibility to pursue its own way, there is also defined the purpose of God in His promises to the Fathers.

In the Book of Exodus we are shewn how He starts to work out His plan and accomplish that purpose. For notwithstanding the witness borne throughout the period of Genesis, there had been elaborated in Egypt (type of the

world) a very highly organised system of idolatry, which in itself admitted the distance that existed between God and man, though proving at the same time its utter ignorance of God and its inability to remove that distance.

Now no one except God, and God alone, could take up the matter of sin and of His own judgment of death, so in this book, which opens with the power of this world attempting to stamp out the line of faith, we learn how God intervened. We learn that God was not indifferent, but could say, "I have surely seen . . . and have heard" (Exo. iii. 7), and He undertook to deal with the whole position in purest mercy. In His providential ways Moses is brought upon the scene, who after being schooled "in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," as the Spirit of God tells us through Stephen (Acts vii. 22), as well as for an equal period (ver. 30) being in the school of God, is selected to be "mediator." Having been so fitted, he is commissioned by Jehovah to call upon Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to free the people whom he was now treating as slaves, and let them go into the wilderness to render God His due. When he refused to obey that voice (Exo. v. 1-3) God in grace gave throughout the land signs (each with its meaning) of His power, an appeal to their hearts and consciences. That there was some

result we may gather from chapter ix. 20, 21,* but the increased pressure of bondage with the persistent refusal brought the judgment of death upon the firstborn of man and beast—the best and pride of nature.

Then by the blood of the passover lamb God shewed in type how He could righteously deliver His people and bring them through the Red Sea into a place where they would be wholly dependent upon Himself. The pascal lamb figures the bearing of the judgment of God sacrificially, and on our side is the basis of God's ways. The passage of the Red Sea completes the overthrow of the enemy and the breaking of his power, as also the salvation of His people; that coupled with the passover is the type of the death and resurrection of Christ on our behalf. In the very execution of the judgment, divine wisdom made a way of deliverance and life for His people—literally then, but now for us on the principle of faith, through the death and resurrection of Christ. Having redeemed them by His power and brought them to Himself, Jehovah could make His covenant with that people, give His law, and establish a priesthood. (Chap. xxiv. 8, 12.) And Moses is called up

* The hail is significant of the means God will yet use "to sweep away" the veil of deceit and appearances, beneath which this world lies. (See Isa. xxviii. 17 and Rev. xvi. 21, the seventh and last vial.)

into the mount in order that he might see the pattern and have a description given him of what would be suitable as a dwelling-place* for God to "dwell among them." (Chap. xxv. 8.)

This brings us to the object of the present paper, for under such circumstances a priesthood is necessitated, that is, those who could stand between God and the people, to maintain what is due to Him on the one hand, and to help the weak and instruct the ignorant on the other; such as could "put difference between holy and unholy . . . and teach all the statutes which Jehovah hath spoken to them by the hand of Moses." (Lev. x. 10.)

On account of the distance brought in by sin, God saw fit to inaugurate a system through which a measure of communion might be restored; a sacrificial system and a priesthood which, while it betokened the distance, was so ordered that His desire for men to draw near was expressed: also in divine wisdom every detail was made to point on to the One vicarious sacrifice of Christ Him-

* The word translated "tabernacle" in verse 9 and frequently is simply "a dwelling place," but used of the tabernacle only in the historical books. It is the cognate noun of the verb "to dwell" in previous verse, which gives also the Jewish word *Shechinah*, the glory dwelling between the cherubim. The completed answer to the divine purpose is found when "God will dwell with men." (Rev. xxi. 3.)

self, in whom the distance and the order of manhood which brought in the distance, might be removed in judgment.

So much for a review of the position as a whole. Two practical questions now present themselves, Who could exercise the office of a priest? What could constitute the "consecration"?

First, who can they be? Surely there is no difficulty in seeing that God Himself must be allowed to determine in such a matter. And so we find that as soon as Moses had received directions with regard to the dwelling-place, God in His sovereignty selects a particular family, the family of Aaron and his sons, from among the children of Israel to minister to Him in the priest's office. (Exo. xxviii. 1.) That office was to be theirs by a "perpetual statute," and they were "consecrated" to it (chap. xxix. 9), they were also "sanctified" (ver. 44) and "anointed." (Chap. xxx. 30.) The book closes with the statement repeated that theirs was to be "an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations." (Exo. xl. 15; Num. xviii. 7, 8.)

From the outset, therefore, it is perfectly plain that the divine thought of priesthood is entirely apart from any human desire or effort, or any attainment on the part of men, seeing it is placed wholly in the fact of their

line of birth. Consequently in the days of partial restoration under Ezra and Nehemiah, those who could not shew their genealogy "were, as polluted, put from the priesthood." (Ezra ii. 62 ; Neh. vii. 64.) This was in accord with the letter of the law and the external character of the old covenant,* as a system in which man in flesh was yet recognised.

Evidently this was in the Apostle Peter's mind when writing to those who like himself had been brought up in Judaism. He addresses them as having believed "the gospel preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." And he explains, by way of contrast, that believing in God they had been "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever"; then as new born babes nourished on the sincere milk of the word, they would grow to be lively (or living) stones of a spiritual edifice, and so a holy priesthood fitted to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

From another point of view the Epistle to the Hebrews contrasts the new covenant with the old. The death, the resurrection and the

* Covenant and testament carry the same thought being used throughout the Bible to translate but one word in Hebrew or its equivalent in Greek.

ascension of Christ are facts, therefore the old and material order which was for sight has given place to the new and spiritual order which is for faith. That epistle is indeed by antitype and contrast the Christian Leviticus, or our priestly charter. There the common ground to every believer is shewn as clearly as it is possible to explain the shadow or type by the substance or reality. He who is our High Priest is presented as God's Son (chap. i. 1), and the many sons being brought to glory (chap. ii. 10) is coupled with the positive statement, "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." So in Christianity priesthood is no longer a matter of earthly birth, sex or age, but one of believing God and the gospel. On that ground alone can we, the many sons, and so as priests (chap. v. 5, 6), "*draw near* in full assurance of faith." (Chap. x. 22.) In other words, the answer to "Aaron and his sons" is beyond any shade of doubt Christ and the saints of the present dispensation; or, every believer apart from class or race is of the priestly family and is invited to draw near. Thus scripture definitely answers the inquiry, Who? that is, as to *title*. Every believer having received the Spirit is a priest in title, though comparatively very few take up the privilege, and they so remain "babes." (Heb. v. 13.)

However, before touching the second question we must notice in Exodus xxviii. that garments are ordered and described for Aaron as high priest, and garments for his sons also, "that they may minister unto me in the priest's office." (Ver. 41.) "Garments for glory and for beauty" in keeping with their office, and prospectively illustrative of the various moral qualities exhibited in perfection in the manhood of Christ. In that day those garments could have been worn by a priest only, one born in the priest's line, and then, too, he must be without a blemish. (Lev. xxi.) Certain garments were peculiar to Aaron as high priest, typical of and connected with the work of Christ, while some were to be worn by his sons equally. They were "holy garments," typically to hide the flesh and exclude its working; thus the wearer was marked as one separated to Jehovah. Now, in this dispensation when it has been written, "We see Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honour,"* it is our privileged responsibility as Christians, the many sons who are being brought to glory, to adorn the doctrine by our habits and behaviour, and in that way be marked off from the world. James refers to the thought of the garments when he says,

* This is LXX translation of "for glory and for beauty," and so quoted.

“whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” (Chap. iv. 4.) He looks for the external and visible to be in accord with the internal and invisible: faith to be evidenced by consistent works.

Then, it was natural birth and material garments; now, spiritual birth and a walk marked by holiness, as bearing the name of Christ, that is, Christian, with the Spirit of glory and of God resting upon us. (1 Peter iv. 14.)

On the one hand Exodus gives the first year, from the passover to the setting up of the tabernacle, during which period God made known His law as well as His desire to have a dwelling-place in the midst of the people. To this there was willing-hearted response and the materials were furnished in abundance. When all had been prepared and had passed the inspection of Moses (Chap. xxxix. 43), “in the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, the tabernacle was reared up” and all confirmed by the glory of Jehovah filling it. (Chap. xl.)

On the other hand, in the Book of Leviticus God gives the ordering of the way in which He could be approached, with the duties of the priests and details of instruction to guide them, in order that the people should be maintained in relation to Himself and be free

to draw near in thanksgiving and worship. In chapter viii. we have the record that Moses carried out in full the ritual of "the consecration." This brings us to the second question ; and to find the answer we must of necessity know the value of the word here employed. "To consecrate" is a word borrowed from the old Latin version, made after the clerical system was recognised, meaning "to make sacred" ; a meaning which, sad to say, in no wise represents either the Hebrew of the Old Testament or the Greek of the New, but conveys quite a false impression. However, the marginal reading of Exodus xxviii. 41 for the word "consecrate" is "fill their hand" ; this saves the situation, because it is the exact translation of the Hebrew phrase, and therein lies the secret of the office. Also when the word "consecrate" is used in Hebrews x. 20 the margin gives the real force of the Greek—"new made," which again is quite a different thought to that of the Old Testament. (In modern English "initiated" would be better.) Now if dismissing from our minds conventional notions, we consider in the light of this the scriptural thought of "to consecrate" or "fill the hand of" (see Exo. xxix. 9 and the references), we shall be led into an appreciation of the significance of the rite. For we have seen that those who were

already priests by birth were the only ones whose hands could be filled, and in that way fitted to act in the office.

Turning to Leviticus viii., Aaron's distinctive place first of all is to be noted. He is clothed with the high priestly garments and anointed alone, apart from blood, as marking Christ's sinless pre-eminence. But even as Christ Himself could not be priest on this side of death (Heb. viii. 4), so Aaron and his sons, as representing the people before God, are identified with the sin offering by placing their hands upon its head. Because as being taken from among men in order to draw near to God there must be first a sin offering (not a trespass offering), so a bullock without blemish* is brought, and by Moses is killed "in the presence of Jehovah" at the door of the tabernacle, and offered as a sin offering in full. In this way the ritual carries deep and searching lessons, for in that sin offering we learn how God in type executed His righteous judgment in order that His sovereign prerogative of mercy might be exercised. The basis in righteousness having been laid, two

* I must point out that the negative phrase, "without blemish," is used for a positive Hebrew adjective תָּמִים *tah-meem*, meaning complete, entire, or perfect, like "the law" or "the way of God is perfect." (Psa. xix. 7; xviii. 30.) A blemish is the outcome of sin.

rams without blemish are brought, typical of two other and connected aspects of the work of Christ. One is offered as a burnt offering and one becomes "the ram of consecration," or strictly "the ram of filling their hand." In other words, that which was to fill their hand was equivalent to, and in a sense identified with, what was wholly for Jehovah—the burnt offering, wherein they learned "acceptance"; and we, as the apostle explains, can know we are taken into favour in the Beloved. (Eph. i. 6.) It is to be noticed that everything was done for them by Moses.

Now while the sin and burnt offering were essential as the basis, they were not the consecration itself. That was confined to this second ram, of which first some of its blood was put upon the tip of the right ear, upon the thumb of the right hand and upon the great toe of the right foot of Aaron, and then on those of his sons, before any was sprinkled upon the altar, as if to teach how their whole being was brought not only under the cover of the death of Christ (the blood is nowhere in scripture presented as an object of faith), but also how they were subjected to Him in every activity, starting with the ear, because it was through the ear (Gen. iii.) defection entered. So in Luke only is it recorded that the Lord healed the high priest's servant, whose

ear Peter had struck off (chap. xxii. 51), and He teaches in chapter viii. 18, "Take heed how ye hear." After that, some is put upon the thumb and the great toe, the principal members of the hand and the foot; the former speaking of what I do, the latter of where I go. So again in Luke the Lord when risen shews them His hands and His feet—those of Him who "went about doing good." And last, "the blood is sprinkled upon the altar round about."

The next step (Lev. viii. 25) is, Moses took all the fat of the ram, the midriff,* the two kidneys and the right shoulder, and out of the basket of unleavened bread three forms of the meat offering, which he placed upon the fat upon the right shoulder, and then he put all upon Aaron's hands and upon his sons' hands—a wave offering before Jehovah. The right shoulder would speak of the strength of purpose with which the Lord Jesus moved when here on earth—the One too "upon whose shoulder the government is to rest" in the world to come. (Isa. ix. 6.) The three forms of unleavened bread would speak of the absence of any movement of the human mind in the things of God (compare Matt. xvi. 12), and also be a complete conception

* See p. 10 of "The Peace Offering," by A. J. M.

of the flawless sinlessness of that life given up in death.

When the parts which had filled their hands had been waved, Moses burnt them, "like incense," upon the burnt offering "for a sweet savour." All was caused to ascend by the fire on the altar, for while His Father and His God alone could fully appreciate these perfections in manhood which qualified Him to be the new covenant High Priest (Heb. v.), yet the type, by placing these parts in their hands, would shew that the perfections of which they speak are brought within the range of our apprehension, as we know Him on the other side of death.

That completed, "Moses took the breast and waved it," which he as representing God had for his own peculiar part; again, only God could know the love, the spring of all that activity in grace.

Then last, some of the anointing oil and of the blood from the altar was sprinkled "upon Aaron, upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon his sons' garments with him" (Lev. viii. 30), as if to put all under the power of the Spirit beyond the reach of death—the new power for continuance. After that they come back, as it were, to this side of things to boil (not roast) the flesh of the ram, and eat it with the remainder of the unleavened

bread at the door of the tabernacle ; somewhat akin to the peace or communion offering, except here specifically confined to the priests. And it was a seven-day "filling of their hand" (ver. 33), a complete period—spiritually one of life-long duration, and therefore not repeated.

The act of waving before Jehovah perhaps carries a suggestion of resurrection (for an actual type of resurrection is hardly possible), like the wave-sheaf of Leviticus xxiii. 11 waved on the first day of the week.

The whole ritual is summed up in chapter viii. 34 by "to make an atonement" ; because the sin offering combined with the two rams forms a complete picture of the claims of God met, and typically a company "accepted" and established in a nearness that would lead to worship and sustained joy.

In this verse we have, I think, the grandest use ever made of the word "to make atonement,"* a "covering" for them in type, but looking forward to the Christian company universally, viewed as graced in the results of the work of Christ. So for us the apostle's doctrine is "reconciliation." The old covenant and the law of Moses could not go

* Atonement is the official and priestly use of a verb whose root meaning is "to cover." God accepted the blood as a "cover" until "the precious blood of Christ" was shed, which has removed not only the sins but the sinner from His eye, "through faith."

beyond atonement, but through the death of Christ reconciliation has been effected (Col. i. 20-22 ; Eph. ii. 16) in that the judgment has been borne and the distance removed, and a new order established in resurrection. We in conscious nearness so grasping and making the food of our souls what has come to light in Him, and then reflecting His character we minister to the heart of God. Consequently the following chapter opens with "the eighth day," that is, the first day of a fresh period—the resurrection day. It is this gives character to the present "dispensation which is in faith." It will mark the millennial day of displayed glory, and involves the eternal day when God's purpose of blessing for man will be consummated.

With the foregoing in mind, it will not surprise any reader to be told that in the Greek New Testament no idea of a clergy as separated from a laity exists, but just the contrary. Unity was the burden of the Lord's prayer (John xvii.), and the answer of a visible unity is recorded in Acts ii. and iv. when the Spirit had come down—"all that believed were together" and "of one heart and one soul." Later the doctrine is given to us by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians xii., where he uses the human body as the illustration of the spiritual fact. "For by one Spirit are we

all baptised into one body," and though the members are many and various, yet as one body it is an entity, a whole, and just because it is "one body," the head cannot say to the feet, "I have no need of you." The fact is again stated in Ephesians i. that God raised Christ from the dead, "and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body."

The thought of unity as connected with the Christian company is further developed in chapter iv. with the sevenfold statement of unity commencing "one body, and one Spirit," and the apostle goes on to say of believers that "unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ," and also that from Him ascended gifts have been given in view of "the edifying of the body of Christ." (Ver. 12.) Again the analogy of the human body is used and five kinds of gifts are enumerated, each necessary for the edification of the whole. So in nature we have five senses, and each is necessary in its function to maintain the organism in health, therefore how can the foot say, "Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body"? Truly he speaks of it as "the mystery of Christ," that is, as something hidden from the public eye, not yet displayed though known to faith, while of believers in particular he can say we "are builded together for an habitation of God

through the Spirit" (Eph. ii. 22); plain, simple, positive language, and though outwardly the unity was marred soon after the apostle died, yet the spiritual reality existed, and exists to-day, while the Holy Spirit and the saints remain on earth.

The Epistle to the Hebrews also brings before us the same truth of unity by clearly giving an answer to the old covenant types. Christ having come and passed through death, all is now in the light of His resurrection, ascension and the presence of the Spirit, whence "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren"; then taking a place on our side, "In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee." (Chap. ii. 11.)

In this way is Psalm xxii. quoted and explained, and then, too, we can understand why in Exodus xxix. the filling the hand of the priests and the sanctifying of the altar are put directly together, indeed occupied the same moment, as if to emphasise there was but the one company and the one altar by means of which God could be approached; as well as only the one place or house where He could put His name (Deut. xii.), then literally, but now morally. So further, our

High Priest is not of Aaron's lineage or order, but "of the order of Melchisedec," who figuratively is of resurrection order (Heb. vii. 3), and thus we have to-day not only "a high priest over the house of God" (chap. x. 21), but in chapter iii. 6 we learn "whose house are we"; so that from another point of view the oneness of the Christian company, or all believers, with Christ as Head and High Priest and the worship connected with the house of God, is plainly set forth.

To go back to Leviticus viii. I think it should easily be seen that the garments refer to what is outward, and speak of the character we bear in the sight of men—really the public testimony, while the sin offering with the burnt offering, which were wholly Godward, with the offering that filled their hands, of which the remainder formed their food, speak of what is inward and the food of our souls.

Also the ram had its distinct place, and throws its own ray of light upon the divine scheme of types. It was never a sin offering, though it was the only trespass offering, and is constantly presented as a burnt offering or a peace offering, that is, in connection with communion and meeting the pleasure of God, not the sins of men. A ram is the chief or father of the flock, and as representing a quiet dignity and maturity, which with its horns suggests a

conception of strength, endurance and beauty, becomes thus a type of that intrinsic worth and moral glory of our Lord Jesus Christ that fitted Him to be the true burnt offering. The horns, perhaps, bring in the idea of the unswerving obedience (Isa. l. 5-7) which held the Lord to His purpose ("held" is more accurate than "caught" in Genesis xxii. 13), which in spirit is exactly the opposite to sin. The ram is brought before us first in Genesis xv. when God confirmed His promise to Abram, and next in Genesis xxii. as typifying the substitutionary work of Christ—"in his stead." Also on the day of atonement it formed the burnt offering, and on the fulfilment of the Nazarite vow it was the peace offering, the enjoyed liberty of communion.

Seeing thus its particular place as both burnt offering and peace offering we can understand how it also provided the filling of the hand of the Levitical priesthood. Their hands were literally filled with what had been obtained through death and which spoke of the perfection expressed in the manhood of our Lord Jesus Christ; but for us it is to be "filled with the Spirit," who has come down in order that we might know and appreciate these qualities, and has become in us the power for a "walk even as he walked." (1 John ii. 6.) So that from us, as having been

formed after Christ, there would arise a ministry to God of thanksgiving and worship. In truth unless a person has the Spirit of Christ, such a one does not belong to Him. (Rom. viii. 9.) In result now that we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour and there is the company He can call His brethren, God has secured what was proposed in Exodus xxix., then in type, but now a spiritual living reality outside the possibility of failure. The old covenant starts from the without, in external ordinances, and passes on to the within, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour . . . and the stranger." (Lev. xix.) The new covenant starts from the within by the "love of God shed abroad" in the believer's heart, and works outward in the manner of life.

The present question therefore is, Am I in the conscious joy of the position very shortly to be made manifest; and am I taking my place personally in the privilege of His service? Above all "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"; it is this that would lead me to draw near "through the veil" to find my part in the worshipping company.

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