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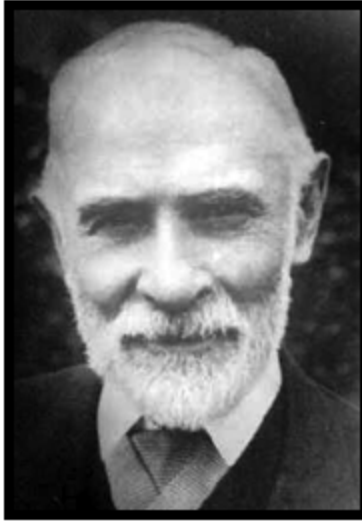
V03 Outline of Leviticus

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LEVITICUS 1

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The Book of Leviticus has in view a people in covenant relations with God, in whose midst God dwells, and who have movements of heart Godward. God had said to Moses, "When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain" (Exodus 3: 12). He had said to Pharaoh, "Let my son go, that he may serve me" (Exodus 4: 23). Here we see the manner and order of that service — the service of a free and willing people; and we learn that every outgoing of heart in the service of God is concerning Christ. Blessed service! Blessed those whose privilege it is to take it up!

What we get here about the offerings has its place in the forty-nine days during which the cloud rested on the tabernacle (see Numbers 10: 11); a time typical of the complete period of tabernacle service in the wilderness.

The instruction in Leviticus is for us; it is doubtful if the children of Israel ever carried it out. In a coming day when Israel's heart turns to the Lord they will enter into the meaning of these types. The veil will then be taken away from their heart, and they will read Moses, seeing the Lord as the end of the old covenant, and the Spirit of all the Old Testament Scriptures. In the meantime, saints of the assembly, being in the good of the ministry of the Spirit and of righteousness, are able to read the old covenant without a veil, and find their affections quickened in the apprehension of the Lord as the Spirit of it all. Nor do I doubt that the church's apprehension of these types has a fulness and expansion which goes beyond what Israel will apprehend in the coming day.

God speaks from the "tent of meeting"; the appointed centre to which His people gathered, where He met them, and where they came into contact with one another in relation to His things. The communication of His mind was found there.

"The assembling of ourselves together" (Hebrews 10: 25) answers, I think, to the "tent of meeting". We also get many references to saints coming together in 1 Corinthians 11 - 1 Corinthians 14. Saints are taught of God to love one another, and if this divine teaching were not neutralized by human influences it would bring all Christians together in every city, town, or village where they are found. The "tent of meeting" would thus have its antitype in every local assembly. Things are very broken today, but it is still possible, through infinite mercy, for saints to come together as loving one another in relation to God, and as they do so they get instruction and enlargement in the knowledge of

God. He has great pleasure in seeing His saints together in love; it sets Him free to communicate His mind to them.

If we think of our own times it is as saints have come together in love to one another as being of God's assembly that there have been communications of God's mind; great light has been given in regard to Christ and the assembly. We ought to recognize that the privilege of the "tent of meeting" has been restored in these last days. Saints can come together as saints, and in the truth of their relations with God and with one another, and this in the wilderness. If believers disregard the "tent of meeting" they will not get much increase of divine light, and what they possess of Christ will not be available for the common good, or for God's praise in the assembly of His saints.

The "tent of meeting" suggests the coming together of saints according to divine order, not human arrangement or organization. The word translated "meeting" means what is set or appointed; it is used of the feasts of Jehovah (Leviticus 23) and other divinely-appointed occasions. To have the good of the tent of meeting it is not enough that saints should be together in one room. They must be together in accord with divine principles, and the truth of God's assembly. Every principle connected with divine order in the assembly is really essential to the safeguarding and development of spiritual affections. There must be holy conditions if God is to meet His people. If saints are at variance with one another they must settle their differences before they can really "come together". We cannot offer at the altar if we remember that our brother has aught against us. We could not be there in the undistracted appreciation of Christ. If we speak of being gathered together to the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ it necessitates that ourselves and our associations must be suitable to that Name.

These early chapters of Leviticus have to do with movements of heart towards God on the part of His people. They suppose that Christ has been received, for if one is not in possession of Christ he has nothing to bring. The morning and evening lamb of the continual burnt-offering (Exodus 29: 38 - 46) give us rather the divine side — the burnt-offering in its abiding and unchanging perfection as the ground on which God meets His people, and speaks to them, and dwells with them. "A continual burnt-offering throughout your generations". It is necessary to be established in the grace of that before we contemplate what is before us in these chapters.

But on our side we have been the subjects of divine working, and the result of this is that certain exercises have been produced in our souls to which Christ is the answer. One exercise is as to acceptance, and Christ as the burnt-offering is the answer to that. Another is with regard to perfection in an object for the

heart, and the meat-offering is Christ as the answer to that exercise. A third is with reference to fellowship, and the peace-offering is Christ in relation to that. And, lastly, there are exercises arising from the humbling discovery of what is in ourselves, and the consciousness of our own failure, to which the answer is Christ as the sin-offering. All God's called ones have these exercises; I believe the germ of them is inherent in that divine teaching which *all* His people have; though there may be with many saints a lack of spiritual diligence to follow them up, and to gain Christ as the answer to them. Our acquisition of divine wealth depends on the diligence with which we pursue the exercises which God gives us. In proportion as they are followed up, and Christ apprehended in relation to them, we have material for offerings, and are able to take part in the service of God according to His pleasure.

The consideration of this will make it apparent that every acceptable offering has cost the offerer something. David said, "I will not take that which is thine for Jehovah, to offer up a burnt-offering without cost" (1 Chronicles 21: 24). It is true that, in a very blessed sense, the gospel furnishes us with everything. It brings Christ to us in all His fulness and perfection, and by the hearing of faith we receive the Spirit. But there is a history of exercise behind every true acquisition of Christ, so that the soul has a real sense of the value of what it has gained. See Proverbs 23: 23; Revelation 3: 18. As to what grace has made available for us, there is no difference and no limitation; it is the infinite fulness and blessedness of Christ. But as to the actual wealth of souls in the knowledge of Christ many of us are far short of the full measure of grace. Many of God's people have not had "the fulness of the blessing of Christ" (Romans 15: 29) presented to them, and many others who have been more favoured in this respect have only received in their souls a small part of what has been set before them. Hence there are different measures of apprehension of Christ, and no one can bring more than he has got. The consideration of this is very exercising, for it raises the question as to how much *I* can bring to the "tent of meeting" as an offerer? If my offering is small, is it that my heart has not been prepared for the cost at which a larger one might have been acquired?

I have often thought of the people we read of in the Gospels who came on the scene with appreciation of Christ. What a volume of spiritual history lies behind the record of each incident! Would you not like, for instance, to get alongside the woman of Luke 7 — we shall in courts above — and ask her how she was led to such a blessed appreciation of Christ?

And there was a corresponding history in the case of each man and woman who came to light as having an appreciation of Him. A similar history of divine

instruction and spiritual acquisition lies behind each offering that we bring to the tent of meeting. Of course it is ever true, as David said, "All is of thee, and of that which is from thy hand have we given thee". It was God's, and through grace it has become ours, and now we bring it back to God for His pleasure and service.

There is a beautiful word in Jeremiah 30: 21, 22. "Who is this that engageth his heart to approach unto me? saith the Lord. And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God". As the blessedness of the covenant is known we shall surely engage our hearts to approach God. It is delightful to God to see His people, moved by His known grace and love, thus engaging their hearts. God has engaged Himself to us in the most blessed way, and the effect of our knowing it is that we engage our hearts to approach Him both as offerers and priests. May it be ever more so with us, to His glory and praise!

The burnt-offering comes first, the offering for acceptance. The sin-offering comes last; it is only as we know Christ as set forth in the previous offerings that we can rightly estimate sin. It is in the light of the obedient and perfect One that we can alone truly learn the character of the lawless one. In the light of One wholly devoted to God in obedience and love we discern how hateful lawlessness is, and how intense, searching and all-consuming is the judgment which has come upon sinful flesh.

The *offerer* in this chapter has the consciousness that he approaches God in divine favour. In the *priest* we see typically a further thought, for he had been washed, clothed in holy garments, anointed and consecrated. All this suggests moral suitability to God; a state in which God can be complacent. Such can minister in holy things for God's pleasure. And then in Aaron's "*sons*" there may be a hint that it is our privilege to be with God in the relationship of sons for the satisfaction of His love. Saints are entitled to be offerers, priests, and sons; they are three different thoughts. But the ground on which we can approach with acceptance as *offerers*, or serve acceptably as *priests*, or taste the blessedness of acceptance in the Beloved as *sons*, is the perfection of Christ and the infinite value of His death.

"He shall present it a male without blemish: at the entrance of the tent of meeting shall he present it, for his acceptance before Jehovah" (Leviticus 1: 3). The offerer is possessed of perfection, and brings it to God with holy delight; all his thoughts of acceptance centre in Another in whom is found unblemished personal excellence. He is entirely on the ground of Christ; he "leans with his hand" on the bullock. What could be more blessed than to come near to God with one's hand upon Christ! To be consciously identified with Him, the heart having possessed itself of Him, and having no thought of

any other? Unblemished perfection is there, God's full delight in Man, and this brought into the world in that holy and glorious Person to furnish through His death acceptance of a most blessed nature for men. So that, as to acceptance, we have but One to consider, and the heart engages itself with Him, and with Him only, in its movements Godward.

And, blessed be God, it is possible for us to do so in the deepest spiritual reality. We do not need to hide from ourselves the truth as to what we are according to the flesh. "It shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him". The word "to make atonement for him" suggests that there is that in the man himself which is unsuited to be brought near to God. All that we were as in the flesh was unfit for His eye to rest upon, but the only way in which we consider it, when serving God, is as having been covered — nay, more than covered, absolutely removed — in the death of Christ to His glory. No self-deception darkens the heart as we draw near, for we realize that holy love has taken its own way to judge and remove all that we were. We fully own what existed on our part, but the great and blessed fact that we engage our hearts with is that even that has brought to view in a glorious way the perfections and love of the Son of God. He has given Himself for us, and our hearts are entitled to dwell on this, and they delight to dwell on it, in the presence of God. And if I know Christ for my own acceptance, I view all my brethren in the same light, and this gives them a wonderful place in my heart. Indeed, the way we regard our brethren reveals where we are in our own souls.

The offerer kills the bullock, and flays it, and cuts it up into pieces (verses 5, 6). What holy and spiritual exercises are here suggested! Saints drawing near to God with true and Spirit-given thoughts of the death of Christ; with intelligent and adoring hearts that realize something of its blessed character and meaning as manifesting the obedience, devotedness, love and glory of that One Man who has lain in death for the glory of God, and to accomplish His will! How that death has revealed the perfection of all the inward and hidden parts of Christ! Every detail of thought and feeling and purpose and judgment perfect! All can be uncovered without any discovery of imperfection, even when tested by the absolute purity of God's testimonies — washed in water. Every divine testimony as to what is suitable to God in the state of man inwardly found its full answer in the hidden parts of that blessed One. How delightful it is to God to be served by those who come to Him with the appreciation of all this in their hearts! And what deep consciousness of acceptance fills the hearts of those who approach, identified in thought and affection with the preciousness of Christ! Many can look back to a moment when they touched this joy, but it is not maintained with them because they

have not cultivated those movements of heart Godward in which the consciousness of acceptance is renewed and deepened.

But if we approach God with the appreciation of Christ in our hearts it involves the displacement of self. We must be prepared to be tested by Christ. Are *we* prepared to have all laid bare? To have thoughts and motives as well as words and acts all judged in the light of what He was? He could say, "I seek not mine own glory". It was at all points a giving up of Himself for the glory of God. As we enter into that it must affect us morally.

But saints are privileged to be *priests* as well as *offerers*. These types run one into another; the man in conscious acceptance becomes a priest, for he only has it in nearness to God, and one who is there is a priest. God's original thought was not a separate priestly family, but that all Israel should be "a kingdom of priests" (Exodus 19: 6). And it is remarkable that we find priests in Israel before the calling and consecration of Aaron and his sons. See Exodus 19: 22. "And the priests also, *who come near to Jehovah*, shall hallow themselves". There was no official order of priesthood as yet, but there were those who came near to Jehovah, and all such were priests morally. Moses was really a greater priest than Aaron, for he enjoyed personally greater nearness to God. Hence it is written, "Moses and Aaron among his priests" (Psalm 99: 6). It is most blessed that God should have brought us to Himself, not merely for our deliverance and happiness, but that we might minister to Him as priests for His pleasure. And every movement of heart that ministers to God's pleasure must be concerned with CHRIST.

The priest in the early chapters of Leviticus is not Aaron, but one of his sons, so that he is not typical of Christ but of spiritual persons who can take up things with spiritual intelligence for God's pleasure. It is the privilege of all saints to be priests, but even if all are not in priestly state the gain of the tent of meeting is that *all*, in a way, get the benefit of the priestly element. It would hardly be the tent of meeting if there were no priestly element there, and if there, it is there for the good of all, as well as for the pleasure of God. It has been said that the most spiritual person in a meeting — whether brother or sister — gives character to the meeting. Every spiritual person contributes that which tends to make others spiritual.

Each individual brings his offering — his apprehension and appreciation of Christ — but the fact that all bring their offerings to a common meeting-place would indicate that the bearing of it is collective. Whatever individual exercises we may have, they are all intended to be contributory to what is collective.

I suppose we all look to get some good out of our personal exercises and discipline, but it is well to have before us that *the saints* are to benefit by the

fruit of those exercises. The assembly is the centre to which all the varied lines of private exercise converge. We may see this even as to the sin-offering exercise which is brought before us in Psalm 51. It leads to what is collective — the good of Zion, and the building of the walls of Jerusalem. And it indicates, too, that if one goes through a sin-offering exercise with God it ends with a burnt-offering. "Then shalt thou have sacrifices of righteousness, burnt-offering, and whole burnt-offering; then shall they offer up bullocks upon thine altar".

There is priestly ability in spiritual persons to take up every apprehension of Christ and present it to God in praise so that it is fragrant before Him, and at the same time is helped and enlarged in the souls of the saints. Thus the service ministers to God's pleasure, and at the same time edifies the saints. The assembly is the place to increase spiritual wealth, for the apprehension of Christ which each has brought there becomes available for all. So that each time we come together we should become richer in the knowledge of Christ, and thus able to bring larger offerings. One delights to think of the assembly as a spiritual commonwealth. The wealth of the assembly is the aggregate of what is known of Christ in every heart. Spiritual men can bring there a large appreciation of Christ, but as it finds expression it becomes available for the enrichment of all, as well as for the service and pleasure of God.

The priest is one with spiritual intelligence, and apprehension of what is *for God*. He has spiritual affections and capability, and knows how to handle what is pleasurable to God. He presents the blood — the witness of death; he has the sense that Christ has been in death entirely for the will and pleasure of God. "I come to do thy will, O God". This does not weaken the sense of acceptance; it intensifies it by connecting it with God's pleasure and glory, and this is a great enlargement. With what unbounded liberty and delight can we approach God when we realize that our acceptance is according to His pleasure in Christ!

In Exodus, as we have observed, the altar is the place where continual sweet odour affords the basis on which God ever meets His people, and speaks in grace to them. See Exodus 29: 42, 43. But in Leviticus it is the place of offering on our side. It is Christ viewed as the One by whom every spiritual sacrifice is offered to God. See Hebrews 13: 15 and 1 Peter 2: 5. Not only is Christ the Substance of every offering, but He is also the Altar. This secures divine holiness, for the altar is "holiness of holinesses; whatever toucheth the altar shall be holy" (Exodus 29: 37). All must be brought to the test, and to the blessedness; of God's Anointed Man. Nor would a true heart wish it to be otherwise.

Every spiritual apprehension of Christ can be brought to the Altar, for it is holy, but nothing can be placed on the Altar that does not accord with it. The best sentiment of the natural mind, even in regard to Christ, could not be placed there for a moment. Nothing really has any place in the service of God, or in the assembly of God, that is not in keeping with Christ as the Altar. The altar being "at the entrance of the tent of meeting" intimates that we come there with a profound sense of the holiness of God, and that it is essential that every movement should be in accord with Christ, and with His cross and death. Nothing that is spiritually unreal can be placed on the Altar. It is possible to use expressions which are not the genuine language of the heart at the moment. The outward service may go beyond the measure of faith and spiritual power. But this will not do for the Altar of God; it cannot be offered "by Jesus Christ". It is better that the words used should be consciously inadequate to express the heart's apprehension of Christ than that they should be high-sounding but unreal. The Altar tests everything, and cannot be touched by what is unholy and unsuitable to God; but it also sanctifies every true gift that is placed upon it. The smallest and feeblest true apprehension of Christ can be offered "by Jesus Christ"; it will bear the holy test of that Person, and of His death, and its sweet odour comes before God as sustained in the power and worth of that Blessed One. The Altar involves the absolute withering and refusal of all that is of the mind and sentiment of the natural or carnal man, but it sustains in sanctification and acceptability every apprehension of Christ that is real and Spirit-given.

Then the fire and the burning on the altar suggest priestly understanding of the intensity of the test which was applied to Christ. He was in the place of sin and death, and all that God is as "a consuming fire" was there. But there was more there than sin and its judgment. We see this in the sin-offering burned without the camp. But in the burnt-offering we see that infinite perfection was there, and that the fire brought out the sweet odour of it. Everything in Him was found, even in that place of supreme testing, perfectly responsive to God in obedience, devotedness, and love, and though all was offered *to God* it was *for us*. How wondrous the privilege to bring the memorial of it to God for His delight, and for our conscious acceptance!

The bullock is what we might call the normal offering, but, alas! how few are possessed of such a large appreciation of Christ as the bullock would set forth. The sheep is a smaller measure of apprehension. There is no leaning upon the victim. The sense of Christ's death and of His perfection is there, but not the sense of personal identification. There is a pious appreciation of the perfections of Christ, but not the happy consciousness of being altogether on the ground of what He is. Still the offerer of the sheep has a certain power of

discrimination, and a recognition of perfection in each feature of Christ that his soul takes knowledge of, but he is altogether smaller in his apprehension of Christ.

Then when we come to the fowls it is feebler still. The priest has to do almost everything in this case. In the offerer there is the sense that any sweet savour for God must be from Christ, but there is not much apprehension of Him. There is lack of ability to uncover the inward parts of Christ, and to appreciate His inward perfections. In the Psalms personal to Christ there is a wonderful uncovering of His inward perfections. To seek them out with intelligent and affectionate appreciation is a profound study for the spiritual mind. Believers in general are too indefinite; they have a sense of the perfection of Christ, but do not devote themselves to the uncovering and searching out of it in detail. It demands spiritual maturity to take account of what was inward in that blessed One — His affections, His sensibilities, His thoughts and feelings. The offerer of the fowls is not equal to this; the victim is not even divided asunder. And not only is his measure small; but there would appear to be that which is natural mixed with his apprehension of Christ — that which cannot be offered as sweet savour, and which the priest has to cast aside.

What we see in this type is that a priest knows how to make the best of the offering of a poor person! If you come to the tent of meeting with a small thought of Christ — and *every* saint comes with *some* thought of Christ — you will find a priest there who can help you because he apprehends according to God what is perhaps feeble and vague in *your* soul. You will find that somebody will take part in a way that brings before God the very thought that was in your mind; but, if he is in true priestly competency, he brings it out according to God, and free from the natural element which was perhaps along with it in your mind. It thus gets enlargement in your soul, and if rightly exercised you get such increase that next time you can bring a sheep! It was never God's thought that any of us should remain poor in the spiritual Israel.

But, while increase should be desired and looked for, it is very blessed to see that the turtle-dove or the young pigeon is spoken of in precisely the same terms as the sheep or even the bullock. It is called "a burnt-offering, an offering by fire to Jehovah of a sweet odour". This is most encouraging, for it shows that the smallest appreciation of Christ is acceptable to God, and that His grace estimates the offering according to the means of the offerer. He does not expect that in a "babe" which He would look for in a "father". The thought of His gracious consideration is "good to the feeblest heart", and it encourages all to approach in liberty.

LEVITICUS 2

Leviticus 2

This chapter brings before us the saints' apprehension of Christ in His personal perfection. It is not a question of atonement or acceptance, but the heart delighting in a perfect Object, and engaging itself with that Object in its movements Godward. Presenting an "oblation" or "gift" supposes that one is consciously in the acceptance of the burnt-offering as seen in chapter 1. There is entire freedom from every question that might arise as to one's own acceptance. We are not now thinking of sin, nor of how it has been dealt with, nor even of the way in which God has been glorified as to it. We are occupied with what is perfect under the eye of God, and under our eye, in a Man here on earth.

We may notice as to the "oblation" that it suggests preparation at home. It was *there* the Israelite had his flour and oil and frankincense; it was there the cakes were baked; all was prepared before it was brought to the tent of meeting. If we are not engaging ourselves with Christ at home, or in private, there will be no gift to bring to the tent of meeting, and no sweet odour for God. How blessed to be engaged with Christ in secret!

"Fine flour" is the basis of the oblation in each case, save that of the first-fruits, which stands by itself. Then what marks the oblation generally is that, while there was a memorial burned as sweet savour to Jehovah, it was given as food to the priests. It speaks of Christ in an aspect in which He can be the food of saints, and particularly of saints viewed as spiritual persons in charge of the testimony and service of God.

There is a difference between Christ viewed as the "manna" and Christ as typified in the "oblation". The manna was given from heaven to sustain men in wilderness conditions. But in the oblation we see rather what there was in Man viewed as "the fruit of the earth" — this expression is applied to Christ in Isaiah 4: 2 — for the delight of God, and to engage the affections of all who are divinely taught to appreciate it. It is what can be offered as a sweet odour for the pleasure of God, and what becomes, as such, the food of the holy priesthood.

When at the baptism of Jesus the voice came out of heaven, "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I have found my delight", the fine flour of the oblation was there with the oil poured on it, and the frankincense was there also, for He was praying (Luke 3: 22). But when, tempted of the devil, He answered, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God", we

see Him true to the wilderness place into which He had come, and sustained there "by every word of God". Probably each saint has known what it is to be sustained by some word of God, but with Him it was "every word". He lived by it; every minute detail in His life was formed by the word of God. If He had not a word from God He did nothing. "Every word of God" found its perfect answer in Him, and came into expression in His life. That is the "fine" grain of the manna. (Compare Deuteronomy 8: 3.) It suggests perfection in minute detail "on the face of the wilderness". In the pathway of Jesus we see a life sustained from above, and which was in every way the perfect expression of that which sustained it. Now He is in heaven to minister from thence to His saints here so that they may live in the wilderness in the strength of that grace which was so perfectly expressed in Him.

But the "fine flour" of the oblation speaks of what has sprung up here and come to maturity, in the Person of Jesus, for the delight of God. It is viewed in this type as apprehended in the minute detail of its perfection and evenness. This is the fruit of a precious occupation of heart and spiritual intelligence. What a study of the perfections of Jesus does it necessitate! What more delightful engagement of affectionate meditation could there be?

We may trace it in numberless features in the Gospels; the law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms are full of presentations in detail of that which is for God's delight in man; and every exhortation which the Epistles contain as to the spirit and walk which are comely in saints is an unfolding of the perfections of Jesus. I am not speaking, for the moment, of His official dignity or royal glory, but of His moral perfection. Everything which Scripture presents from Genesis to Revelation as being morally excellent in man, and for God's pleasure, had its place in that unique Manhood of which the "fine flour" is typical. It can only be brought as an offering by the saint who has apprehended it, and in the measure of his apprehension. But this should surely be, with each one of us, continually increasing.

We lose a great deal by not paying more attention to the perfection of Christ in detail. We should make it the study of our hearts. For example, take the First Book of the Psalms (Psalm 1 - Psalm 41) and ponder every separate quality of Christ that you find. There will expand in your soul the apprehension of a Blessed Man who always lived in relation to God — a Man marked by separation, meditation, obedience, dependence, delighting in good; and ever finding His place with those who feared and loved God. The following scriptures in that book may be considered amongst others: Psalm 1:1-3; Psalm 3:4-6; Psalm 4:3; Psalm 4:7,8; Psalm 5:1-3; Psalm 5:7,8; Psalm 5:11; Psalm 6:8,9; Psalm 7:1; Psalm 7:4; Psalm 7:8; Psalm 9:1,2; Psalm 9:13; Psalm 9:18;

Psalm 11:1,2; Psalm 13:5; Psalm 16:1-11; Psalm 17:3-6; Psalm 17:8; Psalm 17:15; Psalm 18:1-6; Psalm 18:18-24; Psalm 18:30-36; Psalm 19:7-11; Psalm 19:14; Psalm 20:1-6; Psalm 21:1-7; Psalm 23:1-6; Psalm 25:1-5; Psalm 25:9,10; Psalm 25:12; Psalm 25:14; Psalm 25:16,17; Psalm 26:1-8; Psalm 26:11,12; Psalm 27:1-8; Psalm 28:6-8; Psalm 31:1; Psalm 31:5-7; Psalm 34:1-3; Psalm 38:13-15; Psalm 40:4; Psalm 40:9,10; Psalm 41:12.

As born into this world He was "the holy thing" (Luke 1: 35), and could truly be presented as holy to Jehovah (Luke 2: 22, 23). Excellence was found here as "the fruit of the earth" in Him. Even as a child He was filled with wisdom, and God's grace was upon Him (Luke 2: 40). At the age of twelve we find Him occupied in His Father's business, sitting in the temple in the midst of the teachers, hearing them and asking them questions, and astonishing all who heard Him by His understanding and answers. Yet would He keep the place suited to One of such an age: "He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and he was in subjection to them" (Luke 2: 51).

Then, at the age of thirty, we see Him going along with those in whom grace had wrought repentance, and being baptized. Not, surely, that He had personally anything to repent of, but the movement in *their* souls was of God; it was for *them* the path of righteousness, and He would walk with them in it. Not patronizing them, as some great one of the earth might condescend to consort for a season with those far beneath him, but going along with them because they were to Him the saints on the earth, the excellent and all His delight was in them (Psalm 16: 3).

Then it was characteristic of Him that He should be seen as praying at the time of His baptism. It was no new attitude of spirit for Him, for His language, as given prophetically, was, "Thou didst make me trust, upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb; thou art my God from my mother's belly" (Psalm 22: 9, 10). From His mother's breasts to the last cry upon the cross, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit", He was never for one moment removed from the spirit of dependence. There was not only perfection in every detail of the life of the Holy Child and Youth and Man, but it was perfection that had all its spring and strength in God. God was a necessity to Him at every moment; His object, His delight, the One whose will was His only guide and rule, His resource for all things and at all times.

How fragrant to God was this entire dependence of One who took up every detail of His path and every exercise in the affections proper to a Son! I think the apprehension of this is typified by the frankincense put upon the fine flour, all of which was burnt as sweet odour on the altar. There was not a movement of the spirit of Christ inwardly or outwardly — whether the thoughts of His

heart or their expression in word or deed — that did not first breathe itself out to God in prayer, and find its strength in so doing.

So that every movement of His heart and spirit was not only perfect in itself, but perfect in its reference to God, and in the dependent affections which characterized it. We may see this in the frequent mention of His praying in Luke's gospel, and we see it brought out with peculiar fragrance in John 11: 41, 42, and 12: 27, 28.

"And he shall pour oil on it". God would have us to recognize the perfect suitability of that blessed Man to be anointed by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit could come into contact with every grain of that "fine flour"; all was suitable. There was no necessity in His case for "the Holy Spirit *and fire*" to set aside in consuming power through self-judgment a mass of unsuitability such as we find in ourselves. "The Holy Spirit descended in a bodily form as a dove upon him" (Luke 3: 22); He could come into sympathetic contact with every exercise in the heart of that blessed One. Love made Him a mourner in a world of woe, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in a form sympathetic with His sorrow, but as power that God might be made known in a world of human woe in the way of gentleness and grace and healing and deliverance. In the Person of Jesus the Holy Spirit came upon a Man who felt according to God everything that was in a world of sin. A Man in perfect sympathy with God as to everything here, was the suited Vessel in whom all the grace of heaven could come near to men in dove-like gentleness.

The offerer pouring oil on the fine flour is typical of the saint coming, as divinely taught, into the apprehension and appreciation of Christ as the blessed Man marked by perfection in every minute detail, and thus suitable to be anointed by the Holy Spirit. A Man who is the contrast in every way to the man after the flesh. It is the work and delight of God to bring us to appreciate Him — to bring us, in measure, to His own appreciation of Him — so that He may become the Substance of affectionate movements on our part Godward. Then, in result, all this becomes "most holy" food for the priesthood. The heart that assimilates it, and is nourished by it, acquires capability for sanctuary service. It is strengthened to understand spiritually God's pleasure in Christ, and to serve Him in a priestly way with reference to it. Probably the lack of vigour for priestly service amongst Christians generally is largely due to the absence or feebleness of those apprehensions and appreciations of Christ which would manifest themselves in movements answering to the offering of an oblation.

Then in verses 4 - 10 we get a further aspect of the oblation as baken or prepared in different ways under the action of fire "in the oven", "on the pan",

or "in the cauldron". This would seem to indicate the desire of God that His saints should apprehend the perfection of Christ as it came out under different kinds and degrees of testing. "Unleavened cakes" set forth the entire absence of any element of inflation or corruption. But "mingled with oil" suggests the positive energy of the Spirit as giving character to His Manhood. "Mingled" is more than "anointed". It is the same word in Psalm 92: 10, where it suggests that "the whole system is invigorated and strengthened by it: it formed his strength", see note to Leviticus 2: 4, in the New Translation. That which was begotten in the virgin was of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1: 20). The angel Gabriel said to her, "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and power of the Highest overshadow thee, wherefore the holy thing also which shall be born shall be called Son of God" (Luke 1: 35). The true and holy humanity of the Lord Jesus is to be cherished and sacredly guarded by the faithful affections of His saints in face of the infidelity which abounds. It is as essential to Christianity as His deity. Both, alas! are called in question in religious high places. But it is in the spiritual apprehension of a Manhood that derived its character and energy from the Holy Spirit that we can understand the delight of God in Him, and bring our oblation as "a sweet odour".

One would suggest that the most complete apprehension of Christ in oblation character is set forth in that which is "baken in the oven". This would be according to the analogy of the other offerings, where in each case the greatest apprehension is the one first presented. There is also a definiteness of form in "cakes" and "wafers" which is lacking in the succeeding offerings. The offerer has typically a very definite apprehension of Christ as imbued with the Holy Spirit or as anointed, and subjected to the most intense testing. The "oven" being an enclosed chamber would suggest what was hidden from public view — the secret testings through which He passed, which were the most intense of His personal sufferings, with the exception of His atoning sufferings, which are not presented in this type. Those secret testings require the deepest spirituality for their apprehension and for the discernment of how the Lord's perfection came to light in them. His feelings and sensibilities were as perfect as His works and words. What must it have been to God to have One here in Manhood who felt about everything just as it ought to be felt about.

The feeding on Christ as thus known would give us priestly sensibilities. Natural feelings, with reference to what is trying, lead to impatience and irritability. They lack reference to God, and the sobriety which His presence gives. But the offerer who brings "an oblation baken in the oven" has apprehended spiritually emotions and feelings brought out in Christ under testing which were in perfect contrast to all that is natural in man, and which

were wholly delightful to God. And the priest who burns the memorial of it has presented it to God with holy and reverent appreciation, and is to feed on it for his own inward nourishment and formation. But spirituality in both offerer and priest is needed for this, for it is "most holy of Jehovah's offerings".

For example, to enter into how He "suffered, being tempted" (Hebrews 2: 18) requires great spirituality. The positive *suffering* that it was to Him to be tempted could only be understood by one who was, at least in measure, a partaker of God's holiness. Then how He felt the rejection of Israel, not merely because they rejected Him — though surely He felt this deeply — but because His heart entered into all that His rejection means *for them*. Then the unbelief and lack of understanding in His own, so often manifested; the inability of those He loved to watch with Him one hour; the treachery of Judas. Then the bearing in His own spirit the weight of every infirmity and disease which He removed by His power — that found expression in His groan over the deaf man (Mark 7: 34), and His groan over the unbelief of that generation (Mark 8: 12), and His being "deeply moved in spirit" in presence of the desolation and power of death (John 11: 33, 38). All these things show how deeply He was tried in His own spirit by that which He passed through, but they are to be apprehended as bringing out nothing but unalloyed perfection for the delight of God in that blessed One. A deeper testing still remained for Gethsemane, where all the terribleness of death, and of what was involved in drinking the cup, was known by Him in anticipation with unutterable agony. But what did the testing bring out? "Not my will, but thine be done".

These things would all belong, as it seems to me, to the "oven" character of the oblation. The thinness of the "cakes" and "wafers" would perhaps suggest how completely every part of the humanity of our blessed Lord was brought under the action of intense trial.

Then the "oblation on the pan" would have reference to such testings as were more public, requiring less spirituality for their apprehension. Such would be the daily contact with the contradiction of sinners, the varied forms of open or concealed enmity by which He was confronted, His being reviled, etc., the demands of many kinds from many quarters. Each separate part is seen in this type as distinguished, and as apprehended to be in the power of the holy anointing.

And, finally, the offering prepared "in the cauldron" lacks the definiteness and discrimination of the two previous forms of the oblation. It corresponds thus with the burnt-offering of fowls as compared with the sheep or bullock of chapter 1. It suggests an apprehension of Christ as characterized by the Spirit which is true as far as it goes, and therefore acceptable, but which lacks

maturity in development, and in power of spiritual discrimination. Nevertheless it is the perfection of *Christ* that is apprehended, and the Holy Spirit in relation to Him, however feebly estimated by the offerer, and this constitutes it an offering "of a sweet odour". How precious the grace that gives to one a more mature appreciation of Christ! And how precious, too, the grace that accepts the feebler apprehension of another because it is the perfection of Christ that is apprehended and not that of self. Every apprehension of Christ that is brought to the tent of meeting contributes "sweet odour" to God, and food for the priesthood. But we must not forget that an apprehension of Christ, which might be delightful and acceptable in a newly converted soul, might be the sad evidence in an older saint of spiritual indolence and of the allowance of things that have hindered divine growth.

Then no oblation was to be made with leaven; "for no leaven and no honey shall ye burn in any fire-offering to Jehovah" (verses 11, 12). "Leaven" is the corrupting and inflating principle of self-importance which is never absent from man in the flesh. It could not possibly have place in a "most holy" offering. It was entirely absent from Christ, and it must be entirely absent from those movements of heart Godward which have Christ only as their Theme and Substance. I think leaven might come into our oblation if we say more than is really true. There might be an attempt to make our apprehension of Christ appear to be greater than it really is. This would be a puffing up of the flesh in a very sorrowful way. It is possible to say wonderful things of Christ which we have heard other persons say, or which we have read in books, but if they are beyond our own apprehension they are not a true "gift". There would be danger of it becoming like Psalm 78: 36. "But they flattered (the word means "make pretence," "elsewhere" entice, "deceive") him with their mouth, and lied unto him with their tongue; for their heart was not firm toward him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant". How blessed that we can read on, "But he was merciful; he forgave the iniquity and destroyed them not"! "Honey" represents the sweetness of nature as found in amiability and natural affections. It may be agreeable, and even refreshing, in its own sphere, and given of God in mercy; but it enters not into the oblation. When it is a question of what God delights in, the line is sharply drawn between the natural and the spiritual, and the former is excluded. "Honey" would be the intrusion of natural sentiment, which I am afraid often comes into hymns and prayers. It may be sweet, but it is the sweetness of nature. When Peter said, "God be favourable to thee, Lord; this shall in no wise be unto thee" (Matthew 16: 22), it was a sweet sentiment, but it was nature. There was no savour of the salt of the covenant about it, and it was an offence to the Lord.

"The offering of the first-fruits" refers to the two wave-loaves of Pentecost (Leviticus 23: 15 - 17) which were baked with leaven. That was "a new oblation to Jehovah", representing the assembly as composed of those in whom leaven had once been active, though now rendered inactive by self-judgment in the power of the Spirit. But leaven being recognized they cannot be "offered upon the altar for a sweet savour", though presented to Jehovah as first-fruits. The Spirit of God would thus lead us to distinguish between Christ Himself, who can alone be "offered upon the altar for a sweet savour", and the assembly which is of Him, and in which He is reproduced as "a new oblation", but which cannot be a "fire-offering".

"And every offering of thine oblation shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thine oblation; with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt". "The salt of the covenant of thy God" is an expression which arrests attention. It suggests that an offering can only be acceptable as being offered in true faithfulness of heart to the covenant relations in which divine grace has set us, and to which we have committed ourselves. I think "salt" is the preservative power of fidelity and purpose of heart to be true to the covenant. It includes self-judgment, but it involves also a faithful purpose to accept and adopt in our own hearts and lives that which is in accord with what we offer. It is that principle of faithfulness which shuts out the activities of the flesh, and brings in Christ in a practical way. For example, if I offer to God in praise an apprehension and appreciation of Christ as the One who was ever about His Father's business, the "salt" that must be with it to make it acceptable is the faithful purpose to be on the same line — to maintain dedication to the interests and pleasure of God. If my oblation is to praise God for the meekness and gentleness of Christ the "salt" would be that I am fully set to cultivate and exhibit a like spirit. This is the test of the reality of the offering, and it indicates whether one is faithfully committed to the covenant. In a word, it tests whether we really appreciate the Christ that we offer, and whether we prefer Him to ourselves. In many things we may come infinitely short of what we appreciate in Christ,

but the "salt" is that we are set in purpose of heart to pursue moral conformity to Him.

The "oblation of thy first-fruits" seems to come in as a kind of appendix, and I think it presents Christ as apprehended by Israel as *their* First-fruits. God had looked for His pleasure in a peculiar way in Israel; as regards the earth Israel was to be, and will yet be, "the first-fruits of his increase" (Jeremiah 2: 3). But Israel will become this as they learn, under divine teaching, to regard Christ as

their First-fruits. What a day it will be for them when they see that all in which they have so miserably failed to answer to God's pleasure has been secured for Him in Christ! All that should mark the "Israel of God" has appeared in this world in the Christ of God. No trace of it could be seen in Israel after the flesh. But Israel viewed as "the children of the promise" are entitled to regard Christ as *their* First-fruits, and in a coming day they will do so. As they learn to give Christ this place, they will, through Him, become fruitful for God. The after-fruits will follow, and take character from the First-fruits.

The "green ears of corn" would suggest the freshness and vigour of life in which everything wherein Israel had failed to answer to the pleasure of God was found here in Christ. But "roasted in fire" would indicate how the nation after the flesh had treated Him. Instead of the First-fruits being appreciated, and ripening amidst a responsive people into the fruition of the kingdom, they were "roasted in fire". I take it that this corresponds with the action of fire as seen in the oven, the pan, and the cauldron, only now it is in an intensified degree; it is subjected to the direct action of fire.

We may repeat, What a day it will be for Israel when they see that the very intensity of their hatred and rejection has brought out the holy perfection of Him whom they will then gladly recognize as their First-fruits! "Corn beaten out of full ears" speaks of the maturity and fulness in which God's delight was found in Him. Israel will learn, too, to give the oil and the frankincense their place in relation to Him. There will be affectionate movements of approach to God in reference to all this when Israel presents the oblation of his first-fruits. But before that day it is the privilege of saints of the assembly to present an oblation, and as priests to bring it to the altar and offer it as "a sweet odour", and to make it their "most holy" food. May we have grace to take up this hallowed service!

LEVITICUS 3

Leviticus 3

The offerer of a peace-offering desired to be in communion with the altar. "See Israel according to flesh: are not they who eat the sacrifices in communion with the altar?" (1 Corinthians 10: 18). Offering precedes eating. Indeed, we do not get the eating in this chapter; it is "the altar" here; the eating or communion is in chapter 7. The one gives character to the other. Though it may be noted that "all that are clean may eat the flesh" (7: 19). That is, the communion is not limited to the offerer or the priests, but it is available for "all that are clean". No doubt there is instruction in this.

To be an offerer supposes some degree of spiritual wealth in the apprehension of Christ, and an energy in the affections Godward that brings one near the altar to present to God that which has been found in Christ through death for Him. In approaching us God had nothing to say to us about anyone but Christ, and if we approach God what we say to Him in adoration and praise is the echo of what He has first said to us in grace and love. Christ came to us from the heart of God in the unspeakableness of divine giving, and we bring Him back to God in grateful affection and praise. But what we thus bring to God forms a divine bond of communion between saints. We cannot spiritually take up with one another what has not first been taken up with God. He must have the first and best portion. But Christ being brought in, the communion which can be enjoyed together is extended to "all that are clean". Even those who were poor in Israel could partake, if clean, of that which another had brought, and enjoy the privilege of communion with the altar. What a character of grace this gives to the communion of saints! The prosperity in Christ of one becomes the joy and gain of all! But that which is enjoyed has no divine value unless its immediate relation to God as offered on His "most holy" altar is maintained in the consciousness of those who partake of it. And to bring what is unclean into connection with it is to be "cut off from his peoples".

The offerer in this case commits himself to communion with the altar of God. It is emphasized that "his own hands" were to bring Jehovah's offerings (Leviticus 7: 30). There is a definite personal committal first of all at the altar; that is, *with God*. Then in the eating we commit ourselves *with our brethren* to communion with the altar. If we are committed with God and with our brethren to such a holy communion it determines the character of our associations. Hence Paul says, "Ye cannot drink the Lord's cup and the cup of demons: ye cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons".

And he adds to this a very solemn enquiry, "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?" (1 Corinthians 10: 21, 22).

All who have broken bread have committed themselves to this, that they have done with the world as a source of happiness. "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of the Christ?" The One on whom we feed as the Source of our enjoyment, and who is the Substance of our communion with God and with one another, has died out of this world and has no part in it whatever. We have a happiness which is of the deepest character, for it is a divine happiness known in nearness to God and shared with our fellow-saints, but it is a happiness completely outside the world. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of the Christ?" He went into death according to God's will that He might open up to us an entirely new character of joy — joy in God as revealed in infinite love.

If we consider the intense holiness of the altar, how absolutely exclusive it is of all that is not in accord with it, we must understand that there can be no playing fast and loose as to communion with it. At the altar it is Christ and His death bringing in blessing according to the holiness of God. Every element in this world is idolatrous and unclean. How can the two be linked together? How could a soul pass from the one to the other, and have its portion in each? It is morally impossible.

The burnt-offering for acceptance, whether of the herd or of the flock, must be "a male without blemish". For conscious acceptance there must be the apprehension of Christ in the energetic activity in which He was found here to do the will of God. But the fact that the peace-offering might be either "male or female" would suggest that the offerer in this case might have Christ before him either from the side of what was taken up for God in "male" energy, or from the side of what was necessitated by the state of fallen humanity. The known reference of the female in types to *state* would lead one to conclude that the "female" as an offering might intimate what was connected with the latter side. The "female" offering for the sin of "any one of the people of the land" (Leviticus 4: 28, 32; Leviticus 5: 6), and the "red heifer" of Numbers 19 would perhaps confirm this.

The spiritual action typified in this chapter is of great importance, for it is the basis of fellowship in the souls of saints. It is only hearts that have Christ before them that can know what fellowship is in any true or divine sense. I take it that this is the import of the offerer's hand being laid on the head of his offering. He is fully committed to Christ, not only for acceptance, but as his present portion and joy with God, and as the substance of his communion with

fellow-saints. We identify ourselves with Christ; we commit ourselves to Him in relation to the question of communion or fellowship.

A faithful God has called us into the "fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1: 9). That shows the greatness and dignity of the fellowship into which we are called. But in 1 Corinthians 10: 16 we bless the cup, and we break the bread. It is what we do. Each one who drinks of the cup and eats the bread puts his own hand to it, and commits himself definitely to Christ, and to all that is the fruit of His death. And that constitutes the essence of our fellowship with one another. The exercise as to fellowship is often later in the soul's history than that as to acceptance, and as to perfection in an Object for the heart. But there is an intuitive desire in saints for enjoyment in common of that which is our portion with God, and that which binds us together in separation from all that is of the world. If one had no desire to share spiritually with others it would indicate that he had not as yet much personal enjoyment of Christ. Even in the world it is recognized that company is essential to enjoyment. Man is so constituted that he derives the greatest part of his pleasure from sharing it. One may safely say that an isolated man has very little true enjoyment. One might have a crowd of people round one and yet be completely isolated because none of them shared one's thoughts and feelings. "In the day of your gladness" (Numbers 10: 10), and "Thou shalt sacrifice peace-offerings, and shalt eat there, and rejoice before Jehovah thy God" (Deuteronomy 27: 7), and other passages show how peace-offerings were connected with the happiness of the people. The formal organizations of the religious world deprive those who are in them of a great deal of spiritual happiness because they furnish so little opportunity for christian fellowship.

If Christ has become our consciously enjoyed portion *with God* it kindles desire for the fellowship of saints — for participation in a holy partnership here in which we can feed on Christ together. Christian fellowship is in reference to Christ; the apostles' doctrine forms the fellowship. It is not so many persons agreeing to walk and act on certain principles together; still less is it agreeing to differ: but it is that *Christ* has got a place with each one. It is all hearts appreciating One Person, and preferring what is of that Person to what is of the natural thoughts and tastes of men. Not all having the same measure, but all having the same Person in view, and declining to give place to any other.

The offerer's purpose in offering is that he and others may eat together in communion with the altar. He desires a fellowship that is uncontaminated by the selfish and idolatrous associations of the world. He has found that which he can hold and enjoy *with God*.

"In Thy grace Thou now hast called us
Sharers of Thy joy to be;
And to know the blessed secret
Of His preciousness to Thee".

Christian fellowship is the fellowship of the death of Christ; it is the fellowship of His body and of His blood. This is indicated by the offerer killing the animal which he offers. He discerns, in type, the Lord's body given in death. How completely this removes the fellowship from all that is natural and material! The offerer recognizes that he could have no peace or prosperity, no festivity or communion of divine character, apart from the death of Christ. Indeed if we could conceive of Christ as excluding all thought of His death He would be of no value to men. In order to accomplish the will of God and our blessing He has died here. Are we in communion with that? Not simply owning that it is the ground of our blessing, but in communion with it? It puts one in spirit outside all that is of the world.

Then the priests "sprinkle the blood on the altar round about". This implies spiritual intelligence as to the import of the act, for "the priests' lips should keep knowledge" (Malachi 2: 7). In 1 Corinthians 10: 15, 16, we read, "I speak as to intelligent persons: do ye judge what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of the Christ?" The blood of the Christ has borne witness to all the wealth of new covenant blessing in the heart of God and has shown that God would bless men infinitely through death. Now there is priestly ability to spread abroad, as it were, the witness of what is in His heart.

The blood presented on man's side Godward is for atonement; it is wholly *for God*. Hence "no blood shall ye eat". So long as man is on the earth he must own the rights of God over life. The blood is for atonement, and therefore reserved for God. But in the New Testament we learn that the blood which has made atonement is also the witness of the love of God. This is what the blood is on God's part towards us — the new covenant in the blood of Christ. This can be drunk; indeed, a man has no life if he does not drink it; it is open to us to appropriate it freely and fully. The cup of the new covenant in the blood of Christ is a cup of blessing, and we bless — eulogize — it. It speaks of all that is in the heart of the blessed God for men, now expressed in the blood of the Christ. This is the basis of our fellowship. It speaks of blessing outside the sphere of sin and death — blessing of a spiritual order which we can enjoy together — what God is as revealed in grace and love. The hearts of the saints break forth to speak well of all that the cup expresses; we bless the cup, and

rejoice in the infinite thoughts of love which have come to light through the death of Christ.

Those who have to do with God in relation to Christ in peace-offering character can bring near to Him their apprehension of how the death and blood of Christ have made possible for men a new and divine joy in the blessing of God. The blood round the altar in this type intimates that it is God known in blessing that we approach, but that it is blessing that cannot be intermingled with the festivities of an idolatrous world. His blessing coming through death is spiritual; it lies outside the region of sight and sense; it is of a nature that death cannot touch. All this is realized by the one who draws near with his peace-offering, for the altar is that most holy spot where things are known *with God* in their true value and blessedness. We must know first what is true of us at the altar — that is, in nearness to God — before we can be marked in this world as those who have their associations in communion with the altar.

Then there is the presentation and burning of the fat of the peace-offering. It is that which the blessed God feeds upon, and in which none other can participate. Our communion together would lose its true and holy character if we did not think first of God's portion; and if we did not recognize that it is due to Him that the richest and most excellent portion in Christ should be His. There is a peculiar joy in the recognition of this — that there is that in Christ which is reserved for God's delight. If we think of WHO He was it must be so. Because all that He was in His Person gave character to what He became, and who but God could appreciate and appropriate all that? I say "appropriate" because it is twice in this chapter called the "food" or "bread" of the offering.

Think of the Person who said, "Lo, I come to do, O God, thy will": His was a perfect and holy will, but it was surrendered in devoted obedience, at all possible cost to Himself. We see something of the cost in Gethsemane. In the world where man had been saying for four thousand years, "My will be done" — and that the will of a fallen and corrupt being — we see a Divine Person come in flesh, with a perfect and holy will, subordinating that will entirely, and saying in the supreme moment when all the cost of doing God's will was present to His spirit, "Not my will but thine be done!" Do we not realize that there was something in that which it is beyond the creature to appropriate? We cannot measure what was given up for God's glory, and therefore we cannot estimate what its giving up in sufferings and death was to God. But we can delight to offer it, and to know that the very mention of it is unspeakable delight to God. It is a very blessed feature of our fellowship.

There is infinitely much that we can enjoy together, and that we can appropriate as the food of our souls, in that holy Person who offered Himself, but our enjoyment of it is enhanced by the thought that there is that in His offering which only God can estimate at its full worth, and which is God's peculiar portion and delight. We have communion with God, for we feed on the same blessed Person, but we love to own adoringly that there is that in Him, and in His offering, which is beyond us, and which is wholly for God. We cannot appropriate it, but we can offer it. Wondrous privilege! that we should be priests to offer that which only God can feed upon! "All the fat shall be Jehovah's" (verse 16).

"And Aaron's sons shall burn it on the altar upon the burnt-offering which lieth on the wood that is upon the fire". What we have apprehended of Christ in burnt-offering and meat-offering character, as seen in chapters 1 and 2, is carried on in our souls, and underlies the peace-offering. What a wondrous basis the three offerings constitute for the communion of saints — the sweet odour of Christ on the altar! We shall find much instruction as to communion with the altar when we come to the seventh chapter.

LEVITICUS 4

Leviticus 4

This chapter sets forth exercises which we all have to take up personally, for James tells us that “we all often offend”. Wilful sins are not referred to here, for God would not contemplate His people sinning wilfully or presumptuously. Wilful sin in Scripture is really apostasy. I believe the working of the will is typified in leprosy (Leviticus 13, Leviticus 14), and when leprosy breaks out we do not know what the issue may be. Healing can only be brought about by God’s sovereign mercy and power. In such a case man is powerless. Here it is, “If a soul shall sin *through inadvertence* against any of the commandments of Jehovah in things that ought not to be done, and do any of them”. It refers to sins which are committed through unwatchfulness, through lack of proper exercise in the fear of God. The loins have been ungirded, and what is of nature has been allowed, leading to something being done that ought not to be done. The most serious aspects of such a case are presented first — the sin of the priest that is anointed, of the whole assembly, and of a prince. There are degrees of exercise according to the greater or less responsibility of the position held by the one who sins.

“The priest that is anointed” is the first case considered. It is very sad when such a one sins “according to the trespass of the people”. For a saint who has known what it is to be anointed — to have the Spirit, and to be in priestly relations with God as one possessed of holy knowledge — to forget, as it were, the anointing, and act wrongly like a common person, is very serious.

Do we always remember the peculiar and blessed place that we have as being anointed? I like to remind myself sometimes as I go along that I belong to the Man at God’s right hand! I am of that Man, and I have His Spirit! Paul, referring to the saints, says, “So also is the Christ” (1 Corinthians 12: 12); the saints are the anointed company down here. “Praying in the Holy Spirit” (Jude 20) implies that we have a priestly place with God, and that our desires do not move outside the region of the Spirit. There is no sinning there. Jude contemplates the possibility of God’s called ones, preserved in Jesus Christ, being kept without stumbling. The second epistle to the Corinthians speaks of the saints as anointed by God, and the anointing confers priestly capability. For such to sin is a very grave defection. It is — for the moment, at any rate — a bringing into evidence of the fallen man, not the Man at the right hand of God. It is not merely that I have done wrong and I am sorry for it — a man of the world would go as far as that — but my deep concern is that I have allowed something of the man who is under judgment with God. And the sin of a priest

has an additionally grave character, inasmuch as it directly affects the service of God, and the whole assembly suffers in relation to that service. So that, in its issues, it is much more than a personal fault.

It is noticeable that in connection with the priest it does not speak — as in the case of the assembly, the prince or one of the people — of his sin becoming known. This supposes, in their case, a certain interval between the sin and its becoming known to them as such. But the omission of this statement when the priest is in question seems to suggest that the anointed priest would realize at once, intuitively, that he had done what he ought not. This implies a holy sensitiveness in the priest that one would covet. It implies such habitual nearness to God that if, in an unguarded moment, one has done what ought not to be done, it is felt at once, and the soul immediately turns to God about it. My impression is that the degree of a believer's holiness — the degree in which he has truly known what it is to be an anointed priest — can be measured by his sensitiveness as to sin.

When there have been actions or words or feelings that are of the flesh it is often some time before there is any true movement of self-judgment. This indicates that nearness has not been known or preserved, or the distance that sin produces would be more quickly and keenly felt. In such a case the believer has got away — as to the condition of his soul — from his place with God as an anointed priest, though he may have formerly known that holy and near position and character. If we are not habitually near to God we may go on a long time with what is really of the flesh, and not perceive it. It may need a sharp word to our consciences, or perhaps a sharp stroke of discipline, to bring it home to us. "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep thy word". Our true liberty is to judge what is of the flesh inwardly, so that, though it is fully discerned by us and we are humbled by discerning it, it does not come out to be a public reproach.

If a priest sins he cannot go on with the service of God, but to a sensitive priestly heart restoration is not necessarily a long process. It is indeed a grave fault for such a one to sin "according to the trespass of the people", but the scripture supposes that he is marked by the sensitiveness which properly belongs to the priestly anointing. It is very sad if this sensitiveness is lacking; such a condition really belies the character of the anointing.

The moment there is the consciousness of having sinned the divine provision is available. Christ is at once introduced in sin-offering character. Such is grace — the blessed grace of our God! He does not say that the priest must repent deeply for three months, and then, when he has truly and deeply judged himself, he may bring a sin-offering! That might be our way, but it is not

God's. Deep and holy and divine self-judgment is not brought about by thinking of the sin, but by apprehending Christ in relation to it, and by taking up with God what it has cost Him to deal with it and put it away. Christ is available through divine grace. Let us never forget that! Let us turn to God at once when there has been a movement of the flesh, and avail ourselves of Christ in sin-offering character! Let us beware of Satan's effort to keep sin before us, and darken our souls by it, and hinder us from turning to God so that we may learn the value of Christ in relation to it!

The first movement in regard to the sin of a believer is on the part of Jesus Christ the righteous. We have Him as "a patron with the Father" (1 John 2: 1). His advocacy results in suitable exercises being produced in the soul of the one who has sinned, and those exercises are presented typically in Leviticus 4. We take them up in the light of the grace that is in "Jesus Christ the righteous", and it is really the fruit of His present service in grace that we are able to take them up. To be carried in that way through the exercise of a chapter like this — humbling though it surely is to us — leads to great growth in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. If I have sinned it is very humbling to me, but God intends to make Christ better known and more appreciated in my heart, through that sin. It is the exposure to me of what I am, but if I turn to God about it He will use it to enlarge my knowledge and appreciation of Christ. In the case of the priest a large apprehension of Christ is suggested — "a young bullock without blemish". The special seriousness of sin in such a one has its answer in a specially large apprehension of Christ in relation to it.

The sin-offering in each case is brought to the entrance of the tent of meeting, or to the place of the burnt-offering. This seems to indicate a readiness to be perfectly open and candid about the matter. If I have really learned something more of the value of Christ through my sin I can afford to be quite open about it. I do not mean that it is necessary, or desirable, to speak of one's wrongdoing to everybody, but there is a preparedness to do so if any occasion for it arises. It is just the opposite to the attempt to cover up things that we may appear to be better than we really are. If saints were more prepared to own things which they know in their consciences to be wrong it would greatly promote fellowship. Of course, all must be "before Jehovah" to have true moral value.

Think of the impression that would be made on all Israel as the anointed priest was seen bringing his sin-offering "to the entrance of the tent of meeting before Jehovah"! It is true that he has sinned, but he has something greater before him than his sin. He is "before Jehovah", and he is in possession,

typically, of a large apprehension of Christ. His soul is filled with the apprehension of Christ in relation to his sin. Do you not think that would take away the fleshly reluctance to own the wrong that he had done? I do not think Peter minded his fault being put on record for the church. As to Moses and David, it is themselves who have told, in the most public way, the story of their faults. This shows how completely they were morally apart from the sin by self-judgment, so that they had no thought of preserving their own reputation.

If I became possessed before God of Christ in sin-offering character I am sure it would give candour and transparency. I should be ready to listen to James, who says, "Confess therefore your offences to one another, and pray for one another, that ye may be healed" (James 5: 16). If we were more free to make confession of faults it would lead to more prayer for one another. The confessional is the devil's travesty of this, designed to bring people under the power of a false priesthood. James says, "Confess ... to one another". Those who go to "confession" are as much entitled to hear the confession of the so-called "priest" as he is to hear theirs.

If I have done wrong there is moral elevation in owning it, but the flesh regards it as degradation. If I have apprehended Christ in sin-offering character in relation to my sin it will deliver me from the pride of the flesh that would refuse to acknowledge the wrong.

The priest laying his hand on the bullock's head and slaughtering it expresses the sense that he has of the necessity for Christ and His death in relation to the sin committed. It is a deep exercise to have to own to God that one has done something for which Christ had to die — one has given place to the man He died to remove. It may be I have spoken a hasty word or allowed a wrong feeling! Where did it come from? The man in Psalm 51 traces his sin to its root. "Behold, in iniquity was I brought forth, and in sin did my mother conceive me". My sin is the manifestation of the fallen and sinful man whom Christ died to remove. We are not right with God until we acknowledge this.

Christ has borne the judgment of sin; He has died to close the history sacrificially of the man who is only evil continually. If I have allowed something of that man to come into evidence, God would use the very exercise occasioned by this to give me a new lesson in the appreciation of Christ and His death. The death of the bullock, the blood, the burning outside the camp signify the complete removal from before God in sacrificial death and judgment of the man after the flesh. In being brought to appreciate the death of Christ we are brought into harmony with God as to the sin, and as to the source from which it proceeded, and as to the way God has dealt with it.

We learn to hate sin; it becomes only a grief to us. Jabez prayed "that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God brought about what he had requested" (1 Chronicles 4: 10). When evil is only a grief to us, because of what it cost Christ to remove it, we can return consciously to priestly nearness. Perhaps this is the reason why it is not said of the priest that is anointed, as it is of the other cases, that his offering makes atonement for him, or that his sin shall be forgiven. In bringing his offering the priest returns consciously to priestly relations with God. That involves atonement and forgiveness; the greater includes the less. The priest takes up his holy service with a deepened spirituality, as having acquired an apprehension of Christ in relation to what is in himself which he had not before.

The priest brings the blood into the tent of meeting, and sprinkles it seven times "before Jehovah before the veil of the sanctuary". Not once or twice, but *seven* times! Indicating how God would have the soul take up before Him a sense of the perfection of the efficacy of the blood of Christ to remove the stain from before Him of what has now come on the conscience. This is not being washed again in the blood, or a re-application of the blood to us, as some people unscripturally teach. As to justification, or the non-imputation of sins, the believer is "perfected in perpetuity" by the one offering of Christ; his sins and his lawlessnesses God will never remember any more to lay them to his charge. See Hebrews 9, Hebrews 10. The efficacy of the blood never diminishes or changes on God's side, and the believer is in all its sin-cleansing efficacy in perpetuity. But when he sins he cannot go on with God apart from moral exercises by which he apprehends afresh with God the precious and holy value of the blood of Christ.

The blood put "on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense" would intimate that the offerer returns to liberty and confidence in prayer, which he could not do while his heart condemned him. He does not ignore his sin, but it has led — through grace — to an apprehension of Christ which sets him free with God.

I have heard that a broken bone when healed is stronger in that place than anywhere else, and this seems to be suggested as the fruit of a sin-offering exercise by David asking "that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice" (Psalm 51: 8).

Then all the blood of the bullock being poured out "at the bottom of the altar of burnt-offering" seems to provide a basis, as it were, for the offering of the fat. The blood has so fully vindicated every righteous claim of the altar that the offerer can now get an apprehension of the excess. If CHRIST is known as the sin-offering, His value could not be limited to the removal of what is

obnoxious to God. The very way it was done, and the excellence of Him who offered Himself, were such that infinite satisfaction and good pleasure were secured for God. That is the fat. It forms, in a certain sense, a link with the burnt-offering. Restoration to full liberty with God is not complete until there is an apprehension of how the offering of Christ for sin has brought in delight for God. Instead of the moral corruption of the man who has come into evidence in the sin, and who has been sacrificially ended in the death of Christ, there is the supreme excellence of One delightful to God, and its holy fragrance. The priest would resume his service in the blessed consciousness of this.

If we have sinned, the way to get right with God, and to please God, is to avail ourselves of Christ as the sin-offering. Sometimes a great deal of the regret which is felt is not really "grief according to God", but the mortification of wounded vanity. This may lead to a resolve to be more careful another time, but it does not lead to increased apprehension of Christ, and it does not put the soul right with God.

The complete consumption in holy judgment of what was offensive to God is seen typically in the burning of the whole bullock outside the camp. This implies a deep sense in the soul of God's entire rejection of the man from whom the sin proceeded. The wrong thing done is traced to the root, as we may see in Psalm 51, and the soul is brought into harmony with God as to the character of the man after the flesh and as to the judgment which has come upon that man in the death and judgment-bearing of Christ. It is there that we really find "a clean place", for the man of sin and shame and defilement is ended in a holy sacrifice, and the "ashes" speak of judgment eternally exhausted.

The case of the priest comes before that of "the whole assembly", for priestly exercise and discernment would be needed to take right account of the sin of the whole assembly, so that the sin-offering as in view of priestly sensibilities and restoration of priestly service comes first. It remains for us to note the application of the same principles to the different cases which follow.

The sin of "the whole assembly" is a very serious matter, because, like the sin of the anointed priest, it interferes with the service of God. If the whole assembly sins against "any of all the commandments of Jehovah in things which should not be done", it must affect the service of God. The thing may be "hid from the eyes of the congregation", but it is not hid from the eyes of the Lord, and instead of that being before Him which is for His pleasure, there is that which is an offence to Him.

I doubt whether we are sufficiently exercised about the sin of "the whole assembly". Revelation 2 and Revelation 3 shows us the sin of the whole

assembly. It is hid from the eyes of many, but it has really "become known"; the Lord has made it known. Would any one venture to say that the present state of "the whole assembly" gives God pleasure? No, it is an offence to Him. It has left its first love, it has ceased to be in subjection to Jesus as Lord, it does not hold Christ as Head, nor does it own in a practical way the blessed reality of the presence of the Holy Spirit. There is an order established generally which is of man and not of God. The mustard seed has become a great tree. All this is a very grave sin, and the Lord has made it known that there might be opportunity to repent. In the epistles to five of the assemblies (Revelation 2, Revelation 3) there is a call to repent. "The elders of the assembly" have had the opportunity to come with the sin-offering and lay their hands on its head. If there is no repentance the Lord will assuredly remove the candlestick, and spue the assembly out of His mouth. Things are just on the eve of this being done.

Many will admit that things are not what they ought to be, but will excuse them on the ground of human infirmity, or errors in judgment, or want of light. The Lord Himself, in grace, takes account of the sin in Leviticus 4 as done "inadvertently". But the plain fact is that all the things in the Christian profession of which the Lord disapproves are SIN. Place is given everywhere to the man who was condemned at the cross. Whatever is wrong in the christian profession, and contrary to the commandments of the Lord, springs from man after the flesh. The one who brings the sin-offering judges this in the light of the fact that Christ bore the judgment of that man and died to bring him to an end before God. In the recognition of this he can call on the Lord out of a pure heart, as morally apart, by the death of Christ, from that man. But this makes the sin of "the whole assembly" a very grave matter, and when we see it in this light we must take the path of separation.

I would put it to any heart that loves the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, Would you like to go on with something of which He disapproves? If the congregation and the elders of the assembly will not bring the sin-offering of the congregation, the faithful individual must. And how could we call on the Lord out of a pure heart if we go on with things which He has made known to us to be sin? Hence 2 Timothy comes in. We are to withdraw from iniquity, to separate from vessels to dishonour, and to turn away from those who have a form of piety but deny its power.

Those who own the sin of the whole assembly, and avail themselves of Christ as the "sin-offering of the congregation", can truly "call on the Lord out of a pure heart"; and I do not doubt that such can know something of forgiveness in an assembly sense. If the spiritual features of the assembly are found

amongst saints in some measure, and the service of God, and the enjoyment of assembly privilege, it is blessed evidence of forgiveness and of restoring mercy. I think many have tasted something of the reality of this.

In the early part of the last century many godly persons felt deeply the sin of the assembly; not merely their personal failures but that “the whole assembly” had departed from God’s thoughts. Priestly exercise was brought about as to what was suitable to God, and much light was given as to His ways and purposes, and as to Christ and the assembly. This led to a judgment of things in the light of the death of Christ, and to a movement of separation, and the result has been a revival, in measure, of the true spiritual features of the assembly, and of the service of God, and of the enjoyment of assembly privilege.

There is such a thing as assembly exercise as well as individual exercise, and it is deeper than anything purely individual could be, because it is connected with what is suitable to God in His house. So that for saints who are professedly walking together as owning the truth and principles of the assembly to “do somewhat against any of all the commandments” of the Lord — however inadvertently done — is a serious matter. But grace has anticipated the possibility of such a thing, and has made provision for it. The sin-offering for the assembly corresponds with that for the anointed priest; the exercise in these two cases seems to be measured by the divine estimate of the sin, and the apprehension of Christ which meets it is a very full one. In the following cases there is not with each the same degree of self-judgment, or of apprehension of Christ; it is according to the measure and depth of exercise with each. But in the case of the anointed priest and the assembly a divine measure of exercise is called for, having its answer in a large apprehension of Christ.

We cannot go on carelessly with the things of God. There is a tendency to make light of things which are really movements of the flesh, but if we make light of such things God does not. “I will be hallowed in them that come near me, and before all the people I will be glorified” (Leviticus 10: 3). We cannot do that which should not be done, and go on with the service of God as if nothing had happened. There must be self-judgment, and the sin-offering brought. But grace has provided that which will fully and divinely adjust the whole matter, and grace would use even the sin to deepen our self-knowledge, and to give us enlarged apprehension of Christ.

“A prince” or “ruler” represents one prominent in the congregation — one who has cared for the order of the people of God. It is more serious for such to sin

than for "one of the people of the land", and therefore it calls for a stronger and more energetic apprehension of Christ in sin-offering character to secure forgiveness and restoration. One who has been in any way prominent amongst the people of God must have got his place by having certain moral qualities or spiritual formation. He would be a greater man morally than "the people of the land"; otherwise his place would have been only fleshly pretension. But I have no doubt this scripture contemplates a true "prince", not a fleshly pretender. When the sin of such comes to his knowledge he gives evidence that he is a "prince" by bringing a "male" offering. He has a more vigorous apprehension of Christ, and therefore a deeper self-judgment, than "one of the people of the land".

In the case of one who has been a "prince" this would be justly looked for in view of restoration of confidence and fellowship, when his sin had been such as to interfere with these. The offering must be in proportion to the offerer. In a "prince" God would look for such an apprehension of Christ as would give great energy to self-judgment. Such would not spare or screen himself in any way. The spiritual energy in which he would judge himself would go beyond anything that his brethren might require. His exercises would give *them* an insight into soul-experiences which would deepen God's work in their souls.

David is the great example in Scripture of a "prince" who sinned; it is very instructive for us to observe the sin-offering exercises of David. They are fully detailed for us in what are called the penitential Psalms (Psalm 6; Psalm 32; Psalm 38; Psalm 51; Psalm 102; Psalm 130; Psalm 143). These Psalms are not only an encouragement to souls under exercise, but they give us an insight into experiences which are perhaps beyond our own moral depth. They minister to self-knowledge, and to the knowledge of God. We should carefully ponder them in connection with the sin-offering. Each one was written by a "prince".

Christ is always available as the sin-offering, and the sooner we avail ourselves of Him the better. It is good to be so established in grace that when we sin we avail ourselves at once of Christ as the sin-offering. God looks for an apprehension of Christ as sin-offering in proportion to the spiritual capacity of the individual. What is spoken of in Scripture as sinning wilfully is turning away from Christ — deliberately turning away from the sin-offering as apostates do. If a man does that there is no other remedy available; there is nothing left to bring him to repentance.

Grace is the true power of holiness. Grace never excuses sin or makes light of it, but it shows me the holy One of God going to the cross and being made

sin. In His unutterable anguish and suffering I learn what sin is before God, and that it has been judged in Him that I might learn to judge it in myself.

If the sin of a believer is of such a nature as to suspend the confidence and fellowship of his brethren, that confidence cannot be restored without evidence that he has judged himself. Two birds or a handful of flour would not suffice or be accepted, if a man ought to bring a sheep! A female goat is accepted from "one of the people of the land", but a "prince" must bring a male. The measure of one's self-judgment is the measure in which we have apprehended Christ as the sin-offering, and in a "prince" God looks for this to be an energetic exercise. It is not saying lightly, "I am sorry". What a profound depth of self-judgment appears in the Psalms we have referred to! They are the exercises of a "prince" who sinned, and they have become moral instruction for all the people of God. We see there a character and energy of self-judgment that is wonderful, and as we look into greater depths of experimental self-knowledge in another than we have sounded in ourselves, it shows us what we are. We are thus morally deepened, and we get a true sense of what Christ died for. When a man really gets to the root of things, as David did, he has done with making excuses.

The blood being put on the horns of the altar of burnt-offering, and the fat burned on the altar, links the sin-offering with the burnt-offering. I do not think anyone would go truly through the exercise of the sin-offering with God without reaching the burnt-offering. Psalm 51 is a deep sin-offering exercise, but it ends with the thought of the burnt-offering, and God doing good to Zion and building the walls of Jerusalem. It would not be like God to leave us merely with the negative thought of being relieved of the sin. We do not leave God's presence without getting a sense of the sweet odour of Christ in burnt-offering character. We are not only in perfect clearance from sin, but we are in divine acceptance. And the thought of good being done to Zion, would suggest that every sin-offering exercise contributes to the strength and blessing of the assembly. The experience of the one who brings his sin-offering — what he has acquired of Christ in relation to his exercise — results in a contribution to the good of the assembly. And the mention of the peace-offering (verses 26, 31) would seem to be suggestive of the restoration of the privilege of fellowship with the people of God. If a man is really right with God he will be put right with his brethren also.

If a brother has sinned God would encourage him to avail himself of Christ as the sin-offering. That is the first thing to be concerned about. If he comes into the apprehension of Christ and of His death in relation to his sin he will judge himself. He will then be a spiritually deepened man — a "converted" or

“restored” man (Luke 22: 32) — and he will be available, like Peter, for the comfort and strengthening of his brethren. The power of God in grace is such that one who has sinned can be fully restored to the confidence of the brethren, and made a greater help to them than he was before. This shows what God is, and the better we know God the more qualified we shall be to help in the restoration of those who sin. But this is priestly work. It requires that we should eat the sin-offering for our brethren (Leviticus 6). In this way we make the sin our own. Indeed we can never think before God of the sin of a brother or sister without realizing that it is a mirror in which we can see what we are ourselves. But in eating the sin-offering we also realize what the sin has cost Christ and how His death alone could remove it. Then we can take up advocacy and pray for our brother. In 1 John Jesus Christ the righteous is the Advocate, and at the end of the epistle the saints are put in the place of advocacy: “If any one see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life, for those that do not sin unto death” (1 John 5: 16). If you pray for a brother you have a moral title to go to him, and to speak to him as one who has made his sin your own. One who has done so will have moral power.

Little needs to be added as to the sin-offering of “one of the people of the land”, save to note that the offerer in this case brings typically a weaker apprehension of Christ than I the “prince”; he brings a female goat or sheep. It is not that his sin is more easily atoned for, or that anything less than the full value of the death of Christ could atone for it. But we are occupied in these chapters with Christ and His death as known and apprehended by the faith and affections of saints, and in this we cannot go beyond our measure. Perhaps the three classes spoken of in this chapter might answer in some way to John’s three grades of babes, young men, and fathers. God would not look for the measure of exercise in a babe that He would rightly look for in a father. But things have to be taken up in truth according to our measure. The soul has to avail itself of Christ, and to apprehend the import of His death so that there may be a true judgment of the root from which the sin proceeded. If I sin I am entitled, through infinite grace, to lay my hand upon Christ, and He is never far away. The sin-offering always lies at the door, as God said to Cain. Everything has been reached and judged in the death of Christ; it is for us to come into the apprehension of it. Then we not only judge ourselves rightly, but we get a blessed sense of forgiveness, and an enlarged appreciation of Christ.

LEVITICUS 5

Leviticus 5

It is noticeable that the section of this book referring to the sin-offering is longer than that referring to the other offerings; it extends from chapter 4: 1 to chapter 5: 13. Then the trespass-offering is in chapter 5: 14 - 26. That so much should have to be said on this subject is sad evidence of the existence of much amongst the people of God that calls for it. In verses 1 - 6 of this chapter we have three specific instances, which would probably cover in principle every kind of sin amongst the people of God. The first is failure in respect of *witness*; the second is failure as to the maintenance of *separation*; and the third is failure as to sobriety or *self-control*.

The first instance of guilt is that of one who refrains from uttering that of which he should bear witness. It shows that such a thing is likely to occur among the people of God. One has known instances of persons being in a position to bear witness of evil which should have been made known, who have failed to utter it. This is a serious matter, for it is said of such, "If he do not give information then he shall bear his iniquity".

But there is another side of things to which this would apply. We are left here in the place of witness for Christ, and there are times when we are directly challenged — when we "hear the voice of adjuration" — and if we fail to bear witness we are guilty. The Lord heard "the voice of adjuration" when before the High Priest (Matthew 26: 63), and He witnessed a good confession. We are responsible to be confessors of the truth — confessors of Christ — but we often fail to utter what we should witness; we shrink from the reproach which is connected with the Name of the Lord Jesus. Christ Jesus witnessed the good confession in the presence of the High Priest and of Pontius Pilate (1 Timothy 6: 13), and this would show that "confession" is not amongst believers, but in the presence of the hostile world. It does not mean telling Christians that one believes in Jesus, but owning Him before unbelievers.

True confession is in answer to a challenge. At school, or in the office, or at the works, you are asked to do something, or to go somewhere, and you are obliged to decline because you know that it would not please the Lord Jesus. Then the challenge comes, Why not? Now you have to utter what is in your heart! Sometimes we evade the reproach — which is really a privilege and honour — by merely saying, I do not go to the pictures, or whatever it is. But tell them why! The Lord Jesus has become great and precious to you. In the presence of those to whom He is nothing confess that He is great to you, He is

Lord to you! Such a confession involves cost, because it involves bearing the reproach of Christ; that is really the greatest and truest honour.

Our witness is to be of what we have "seen or known" in Christ. If we have travelled along the moral road mapped out in this book, and learned Christ as the burnt-offering, the oblation, the peace-offering, and the sin-offering, He has acquired a great place in our affections, and we are to witness accordingly. We have "seen or known" something that is worth confessing. Then let us confess it! Many hold back because they feel they will bungle over it. Perhaps you will bungle, but never mind, get it out! There is tremendous power in just saying, Jesus is Lord to me. The man to whom you say it knows, at the bottom, that Jesus ought to be Lord to him, and his conscience will support your confession, whatever he may say with his lips, and the Holy Spirit will support it too. Some are kept back from witnessing of what they have "seen and known" by the fear that they will not be consistent. But the witness gets divine support; all the power of the kingdom of God supports a confessor of the Lord Jesus. Satan would keep us back from being true witnesses so that we might not get the support of the kingdom. A man, who in a foreign land was ashamed of the British flag, could not expect to be supported by British power if he got into difficulties. You may depend upon it that in God's kingdom the flag will be honoured and supported. Then let us not be ashamed of it.

I suppose most of us know what it is to have sinned by failing to utter what was in our hearts! Why did we not utter it? Because we shrank from the cost, and we missed an opportunity of bringing Christ into evidence. It was for the moment a hiding of Christ and a retaining of self. Every true confession brings Christ into evidence in a positive way; there is something aggressive about it; it is additional to the quiet and retiring life of one who does not want the world or its things. One cannot but feel that there is often a holding back of witness to what has been "seen or known". And such a holding back, when one is definitely challenged, is *sin*.

Then in verses 2 and 3 it is a question of touching what is unclean. The world is full of many different kinds and degrees of uncleanness, as we see in figure in these verses. Large things and small things — beast, cattle, or crawling thing. Unless we preserve separation there is not only personal failure, but the fellowship is compromised. "Wherefore come out from the midst of them, and be separated, saith the Lord, and touch not what is unclean, and I will receive you; and I will be to you for a Father, and ye shall be to me for sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Corinthians 6: 17, 18). We cannot be on terms of intimacy and friendship with the unconverted, or make companions of them and walk in their ways, without being rendered unclean. The unclean

creatures of verse 2 would perhaps typify things outside oneself — association with unbelievers as referred to in 2 Corinthians 6. While the “uncleanness of man” (verse 3) would perhaps be more what we get in 2 Corinthians 7: 1. “Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us purify ourselves from every pollution of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in God’s fear”. That is every uncleanness which we find in ourselves; we have to preserve purity from it all.

The third form of specific sin (verse 4) is “talking rashly with the lips, to do evil or to do good, in everything that a man shall say rashly with an oath”. If it was “to do evil” one ought never to have said it at all; if it was “to do good” one ought not to say it without doing it. The sin here lies in the rashness of what is said, and the more rash a man is in his speech the more likely is he to strengthen what he says by an oath. See Matthew 26: 74. Strong asseveration is very often found identified with rashness and sin. A man whose intents and purposes are formed in the fear of God does not speak rashly, nor does he need to use anything in the nature of an oath. Our Lord has said, “But let your word be Yea, yea; Nay, nay; but what is more than these is from evil (or, the evil one)” (Matthew 5: 37). Alas! the unsubdued state of the heart often discloses itself in the rashness of the lips! Indeed James says, “If any one offend not in word, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body too”.

If one has sinned in any of the three ways here spoken of, the moment comes “when he knoweth it”. The prophetic word comes home, either in secret or through ministry, and there is the consciousness of having allowed what is of the flesh. A cloud comes over the joy; there is not freedom in the service of the Lord, or in prayer, or in fellowship with the brethren. Then an upright soul turns to God in confession,

and brings his trespass-offering. Provision is made for cleansing, and for learning in a new way the value of Christ, as we have seen in chapter 4.

It is very encouraging to see the grace that makes provision for one who is not able to bring a sheep or a goat. The one contemplated in verses 7 - 10 is feeble in his exercises, and in his apprehension of Christ. But he gets cleansing and forgiveness though he can only bring “two turtle-doves or two young pigeons”. God takes account of the actual conditions which are found amongst His people, and in this the measures of all are not alike. There is not with all the same capacity for the apprehension of Christ, and therefore, not the same capacity for self-judgment. The cause of these differences, and of some having less ability than others, is not explained here, and we need not attempt to account for it. It exists as a matter of fact, and God recognizes it, and we have to recognize it. There are moral differences just as there are mental and physical differences. In this chapter God takes account in grace of

different capacities in His people. The man who brings two birds has a smaller apprehension than the one who brings a sheep. But even he is able to discern the difference between Christ as the sin-offering and as the burnt-offering. The second bird seems to take the place here of the fat in the larger offerings, and brings in the thought of the blessed acceptability — the positive excellence and sweet fragrance — of Christ in the offering of Himself. So that it indicates an apprehension in the offerer not only of clearance, but of the excess that secures for him through the death of Christ a return to the joy of acceptance.

There is an even smaller measure in one who brings "the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour". This represents the feeblest measure of exercise that is taken account of in this connection. There is no true perception in such an offerer that his sin necessitated the death of Christ. He does not measure it in its true gravity, nor realize that sin is such a solemn thing that death is its penalty. But he has a sense that he has done wrong, and he has also a sense of the perfectness of Christ. He could say of Him, like the thief, "This man has done nothing amiss". He judges himself in some measure — perhaps a small measure — in the light of what Christ was. And he has a conviction that only what was seen in Christ will do for God. He has the impression in his soul that Christ is needed, and he has to do with God about his sin in the consciousness of this, and in the grace of God he gets forgiveness.

It is wonderful how God accepts any measure of true exercise, and any measure in which a soul apprehends Christ and judges himself in the light of Christ, and this ought to have its answer in what we look for in one another. We must not expect to find the same depth of self-judgment in every one. If we have to do with a brother whose exercises are feeble we are apt to say that there is little in him. This is perhaps true, but it should not lead us to think little of him. There is more need for our priestly service for him, and that he should be cared for and helped. If I regard him as of no account, I show that I no more understand his divine value than he does himself!

These provisions made in grace do not in any way excuse carelessness or lightness as to sin. No one can say, It does not matter whether I judge myself deeply or not. God knows our ability, and if we ought to bring a sheep He will not accept a handful of flour. We may be assured that the priest would never accept two birds from a man who was able to bring a goat! But while remembering this as to ourselves, we should remember as to others that all have not the same apprehension of Christ in sin-offering character, and therefore have not the same capacity for self-judgment. And the provisions of this chapter meet very graciously the exercises of many who have sinned,

whose distress is that they do not feel able to judge themselves as deeply as they would like to do. Satan often uses this to keep souls in bondage. If you are conscious that you have sinned, and if you have had to do with God about it in spiritual reality, and have availed yourself of Christ as the sin-offering according to your measure, you may be fully assured that the sin is forgiven. And your moral capacity is really being increased by the exercise; you are learning more fully to distinguish "good and evil" (Hebrews 5: 14), and to judge the latter in view of Christ and of His death.

We come to the trespass-offering in verses 14 - 26. The difference between the sin-offering and the trespass offering would seem to be that in the sin-offering the offence is viewed as a question of what is due to God in His holy nature and to His dwelling-place in the midst of His people. Hence *confession* of the sin and the holy exercise of self-judgment connected with the apprehension of Christ in sin-offering character are needed. But sin has very often to be looked at not only as grieving to God in His holy nature, but as an offence against His government. It is in connection with His government that restitution comes in. If one has been unfaithful in the holy things of Jehovah it is not enough that one should confess and bring a sin-offering. Restitution must be made for the wrong done; it must be put right. There was something due to God that was not rendered in its season, and things will not be right until it is rendered.

"If any one act unfaithfully and sin through inadvertence in the holy things of Jehovah". Such a one has failed to render what was due to God. The tithes are the last thing mentioned in this book, and they are "holy to Jehovah" (Leviticus 27:30-33). There was no prosperity in Israel when the tithes were not brought. See Malachi 3: 8 - 12. Our lives are to be so ordered that there is something distinctly for God. When this is so, the way we act in our households and in our business, ministers to our spiritual food, and helps us as Levites. See Deuteronomy 14:22,23; Deuteronomy 14:29; Numbers 18: 21. If the tithes are rendered there is food in God's house (Malachi 3: 10), and you may depend upon it that if you minister to the house, the house will minister to you! Then the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, will have their share; grace will flow out in every direction where there is need. If there is a lack of food and blessing it raises the question whether "the whole tithe" has been brought "into the treasure-house". If we considered more for God, and His portion, the result would be much food to be enjoyed when we come together (Deuteronomy 14: 22, 23). And what we are as dwelling in the land would minister to what we are as Levites.

One cannot doubt that there is much unfaithful acting "in the holy things of Jehovah". But a soul really conscious of having sinned in this way would be exercised to make up the deficiency, and even to go beyond. And it is noticeable that the principle of "valuation" comes in here. This is not left to the individual conscience, but to the valuation Moses. If there is a trespass in the "holy things" none can estimate it but the One who is Son over God's house. As to God's holy things Christ is the only One who can justly estimate unfaithfulness, and what is needed to put things right. There must be a special having to do with Him. It is important to see that there is such a thing as "the shekel of the sanctuary". That is, a divine standard of moral value. People do not think much of a trespass in "holy things" today. It is appalling how holy things are trifled with, and made the plaything of the mind of man. God's redemption rights are ignored, and the holiness of His sanctuary profaned, in innumerable ways. But there is One who rightly estimates everything. We see this in Revelation 2 and 3.

If there has been unfaithfulness in the "holy things" one must get to the Lord about it, and get His valuation. This brings in a marked difference from the sin-offering, in which the offering is according to the capacity of the one who has sinned. In the trespass-offering all is according to the valuation of Moses. This brings in a divine estimate, and therefore in each case the offering is a ram.

Moses is a type of Christ as Son over God's house; every trespass must be valued by Him. Verses 17 - 19 expressly refer to one who does not even know that he has sinned. "Yet is he guilty, and shall bear his iniquity ... he hath certainly trespassed against Jehovah". One should always remember the possibility of having sinned without knowing it. Paul said, "I am conscious of nothing in myself; but am not justified by this; but he that examines me is the Lord" (1 Corinthians 4: 4). I may not know that I have trespassed, but *Moses* may know! How important it is then really to have to do with the Lord, and get His valuation of things! I trust our souls feel the need of taking up the exercise of Psalm 139. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; prove me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any grievous (or idolatrous) way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting". We shall get the Lord's valuation at the judgment-seat, but it would be better to get it beforehand. For the trespass-offering is available now, and it gives opportunity for increase in the knowledge of Christ. Believers are sometimes afraid of facing things with the Lord: they do not know how much gain there is in doing so.

Getting the valuation of Christ leads to bringing an offering of full maturity and strength, and this secures a corresponding energy of self-judgment. Christ

values "by shekels of silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary". He knows perfectly the divine rights which have been infringed, and the holiness of the sanctuary which has been offended. And the result of having to do with Him is that we are able to bring "the ram of the trespass-offering". A ram indicates maturity and energy; it is a very strong and distinctive apprehension of Christ as covering in the value of His death the sin which has been committed in the "holy things".

If we have sinned in regard to the "holy things", a wonderful measure of restoration is open to us through the grace of God. There is ability in the man who brings the trespass-offering to "make restitution", and even to "add the fifth part thereto". Thus God gets more in result than He would have had originally.

After Mark's failure and restoration Paul could say that he was "serviceable to me for ministry", and his Gospel indicates a very energetic appreciation of Christ. I have no doubt he got a divine valuation of things, and brought his trespass-offering, and made restitution with a fifth part added. We have all gained by his exercise. The soul that has brought the ram of the trespass offering will be henceforth an enlarged contributor in the assembly.

If some divine principle has been ignored by the people of God, the trespass will not be put right until they accept that principle and act on it. And when such a trespass is rightly felt it will lead to a special care about that principle which would correspond with the "fifth part" added.

The trespass-offering involves restitution. Grace comes in to enable one to make full reparation. It is not merely that atonement is made, but whether in the case of what is due to God or to one's neighbour, it is fully rendered with an added fifth. I suppose that Mark in going to be with Paul in prison at Rome at the close of his life was really undertaking a more difficult and dangerous service than the one he had shrunk from in earlier days. He added the fifth part. It is not simply being forgiven, and going on with God as forgiven, but the failure is *made good* so that the one whose rights had been infringed is better off than he was before! I have injured a brother — said something untrue of him or the like — and I have really brought the trespass-offering according to the valuation of the Lord, I shall restore in full. I shall not be afraid of letting myself down too much; I shall add the fifth part thereto. And the result will be that the brother I have injured will think more of me than he ever did before, for he has now seen more of the grace of God in me. Thus God has gained, for He has had the Ram of the trespass-offering brought to Him; the one who was trespassed against has gained, for all that was taken away has been restored with twenty per cent interest; and the trespasser has

gained, for he has learned to distinguish good and evil in a truer way, and he has acquired an apprehension of Christ which he had not before, so that he can bring more of Christ to the assembly than he ever did before. So that the whole assembly gains also. How happy would it be if every wrong amongst the people of God were righted in this way! And this is undoubtedly what the grace of God would bring about. It is a fine finish to the exercises which Leviticus 4 and 5 bring before us.

'An entrusted thing or a deposit' (verse 6:2) may suggest that we hold a good deal on trust for the people of God, and it is a serious exercise as to whether we are true to the trust, and discharging its obligations. Whatever we have of Christ, and of the precious truth of God, belongs to all our neighbours. We hold it, in a sense, upon trust for all saints, and we are under obligation to see that — so far as in us lies — they get the good of it. One feels sometimes like saying to believers, "I have some very valuable property of yours in my charge, and the sooner you put in your claim for it the better pleased I shall be". All the precious truth in regard to Christ and the assembly is a "good deposit entrusted", and we have a holy responsibility to see that it does not suffer any diminution or damage in our hands, but that it is preserved in its full value, and held faithfully for the whole church to whom it belongs. The gospel,

too, is a sacred trust. These things are not to be held as if they were our exclusive property; they belong to many others. Paul had the sense of having things entrusted to him, and he was exercised not to be guilty in regard to them (Romans 1: 14, 15; 1 Corinthians 9: 16 - 23; 1 Timothy 1: 11; etc.).

LEVITICUS 6

Leviticus 6

This chapter, and the next, gives us *the law* of the offerings, and this is chiefly for "Aaron and his sons". That is, it views the offerings from the standpoint of *priestly* activities, and this exclusively until the peace-offering is brought in, when the range widens to "the children of Israel", and the thought of fellowship is the final note. "The law" indicates the fixed principle on which the service of God must be carried on. If there is not priestly exercise with regard to Christ in burnt-offering, oblation, and sin-offering character, the fellowship of God's people will be impaired. The general lack of priestly exercises at Corinth led to things which compromised the fellowship. But there was priestly activity on the part of some and on the part of Paul, and the result was that the Lord gave a prophetic ministry which brought about self-judgment, and restored divine conditions of fellowship. A priest is a spiritual person who considers first what is due to God.

The first thing in "the law of the burnt-offering" is that "the burnt-offering shall be on the hearth on the altar all night unto the morning, and the fire of the altar shall be kept burning on it". The "night" indicates the character of the period which has followed the offering of Christ. The "morning" is coming, prefigured by Solomon dedicating the house (2 Chronicles 5 - 2 Chronicles 7), when there will be universal gladness brought in on the ground of the burnt-offering, and the earth will be filled with divine glory. But in the meantime it is "night". Christ is disallowed and rejected; it is still the time of His delivering up and sufferings.

It was by the eternal Spirit that Christ offered Himself without spot to God. His inward perfections were tested by all that God is as in holiness against sin. That testing brought out the sweet savour of infinite perfection. It will never be repeated. "The ashes" are the witness that that testing is past, and can never be gone through again. It was a "whole burnt-offering"; all that Christ was wholly devoted to God in the place of sacrifice, and found infinitely perfect and fragrant. All was accomplished in the offering of Christ once for all.

But the "continual fire" on the altar speaks of how the fragrance of Christ is perpetuated before God in the praises of the saints. It is the priests' business to keep the fire burning. See verses 2, 5, 6. It is to burn "all night unto the morning". This is to go on continually as priestly service. Fervent affections are to be maintained in which the preciousness and perfections of Christ are cherished by the Spirit in such wise that they ascend to God in continual praise. The Songs of degrees lead up to this point. "Behold, bless Jehovah, all

ye servants of Jehovah, who *by night* stand in the house of Jehovah. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless Jehovah" (Psalm 134). This is an "all night" priestly activity which is to go on until the last verse of the Psalm brings in "the morning".

The Spirit is fire to consume and set aside in judgment all that is of the flesh; He is the "spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning" (Isaiah 4: 4). But he loves to take another aspect, and to be the power by which the fragrance of Christ as the burnt-offering is caused to ascend in the praises of the holy priesthood — "a continual fire". In the oil for the candlestick (Exodus 27: 20) we have seen a type of the Spirit as the One who maintains the light of Christ in ministry man-ward all through the night of His absence. But in the "continual fire" I think we see the Spirit as the power for the presentation of Christ God-ward in praise. We "worship by the Spirit of God" (Philippians 3: 3). The priests stand by the altar "all night" to perpetuate in their intelligent praises the fragrance of the burnt-offering.

The "wood" in this connection might perhaps represent a condition of soul which is readily available for the action of the Spirit — spiritual affections which are quickly moved to intense activity when they are ordered in a priestly way before God for His service. The two on the way to Emmaus quickly responded to the priestly handling of the Lord, and their affections burst into flame. "Was not our heart burning in us as he spoke to us on the way, and as he opened the scriptures to us?" (Luke 24). The Lord was really at that moment doing what was afterwards the Spirit's work, and there was that in them which soon caught fire. The priestly service brought before us in "the law of the burnt-offering" is no cold formality or religious routine; it is marked by holy fervour such as the Spirit alone could create or maintain. The wood being "in order" would suggest intelligent and spiritually regulated affections such as Paul had in view when he said, "I will pray with the spirit, but I will pray also with the understanding; I will sing with the spirit, but I will sing also with the understanding" (1 Corinthians 14: 15). Fervency in spirit and intelligent order must ever be found together in the service of God. But the fervency and order are under priestly charge; all is spiritual in character; there is no natural or fleshly element in the fervency or in the order; they are such as could only be brought about by spiritual means and by spiritual persons.

In the priest dealing with "the ashes" we have an entirely different exercise before us, but one which perfectly corresponds with what we have been considering. The "ashes" speak of a sacrifice wholly consumed; they speak of a dead Christ. I would put it to my own heart as to whether I know what it means to put on linen garments and take up the ashes? If we are in His

acceptance with God it is surely a righteous thing to be dead with Him here! We take this up first *with God*. I understand that to be intimated by putting the ashes "beside the altar". From the altar the "continual fire" is causing the sweet odour to ascend, but "beside the altar" we confess that Christ is in "the place of the ashes" — He is a dead Christ here. We cannot in righteousness be identified with the one without being identified with the other. It is a matter of righteousness to identify ourselves with the place Christ has in this world. Paul makes this the basis of his appeal to the Colossians, "If ye have died with Christ" (Colossians 2: 20). And in what is probably the most ancient "spiritual song" of christian times — quoted in 2 Timothy 2: 11 - 13 — we read "For if we have died together with him, we shall also live together". This is believed to be part of a hymn; at any rate it was current amongst the saints, and it is most likely an example of the kind of song in which the early Christians spoke to themselves and to one another!

Then, having taken our place in righteousness *with God* as identified with a dead Christ here, we "put on other garments". I think that suggests that we deliberately prepare ourselves for the place of reproach here. If we wear garments of righteousness with God we must wear garments of reproach with men. The ashes are to be carried forth "without the camp unto a clean place". We must leave everything that has a name, or a place, or religious sanction upon earth to bear the reproach of One who has no place here at all save in the hearts of those who love Him. See Hebrews 13: 13. The place of the reproach of Christ is the only "clean place" here.

I think the action of Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus may illustrate the teaching of this type. They were true disciples but secretly. They had never put on their linen garments! But the death of Christ brought things to an issue, and the claims of righteousness could no longer be evaded. In identifying themselves with the dead Christ, and claiming His precious body, they put on their linen garments. He was to them the Christ of God, but the place of death was His in this world. And they carried the ashes forth unto a clean place. Nothing marks the place of Christ in relation to this world more definitely than His burial. He has wholly disappeared from the view of the world, and will not appear again until His foes are made His footstool. Do you not think those two hearts went out with Him from everything here? The council — the great assemblage of religious leaders — had condemned Him to death, but they identified themselves with Him. No one could think that either of them ever took his seat in the council again! They came out in true priestly character. The only "clean place" here is the place of identification with the death and burial of Christ. To be identified with the acceptance of the burnt-offering, and to be sustaining the fragrance of it before God "all night", necessitates also

that we should be identified with the “ashes” and with the “clean place” without the camp. “This is the law of the burnt-offering”.

In “the law of the oblation” we have the priests’ part in relation to that offering. The *offerer* represents the saint in his exercises with regard to the acquisition of Christ, and movements of heart God-ward which are typified by his coming with a “gift”. It is a contrast with man in his emptiness saying, “Nothing in my hand I bring”; it is the saint coming with that in his heart which is delightful to God. In the apprehension and appreciation of Christ we realize that the time of God’s grief as to man is past, and the time of His good pleasure has come. A new kind of humanity has come in in the Person of Jesus, perfect in every detail, and suitable to be anointed by the Holy Spirit. Indeed He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and every part of His humanity was invigorated and strengthened by the Holy Spirit of God. No leaven was there.

The *priest* represents the saint as having holy and intelligent knowledge of how the offering is to be dealt with for the service and pleasure of God. We should covet to be true “sons of Aaron”, as well as offerers.

The priest presents the oblation “before Jehovah, before the altar”, and then burns upon the altar his handful of the fine flour and of the oil, and all the frankincense. God has His portion first. Then “the remainder thereof shall Aaron and his sons eat: unleavened shall it be eaten in a holy place”. What we eat becomes part of ourselves; it is assimilated into our being; our constitution is formed and built up by it. The holy priesthood is nourished and strengthened, and formed in sensibilities and character, by feeding on Christ as the oblation. There is no feeding on Christ as the burnt-offering; that all goes up to God on the altar. We can apprehend and appreciate it, but we do not appropriate it as food. But as the oblation, God gives Christ to the priesthood as food; self-judged persons walking in the Spirit can feed on Him; and the Christian viewed as a priest is marked by the appropriation of Christ in this character; thus Christ becomes Substance in his affections. It is a great thing when Christ has become the hidden Man of the heart — when God can look into the hearts of His saints and see Christ there instead of self and the world.

God would have our inward thoughts and affections formed and nourished by feeding upon Christ, so that the way we think and feel about things might be according to Christ, and this would result in His being reproduced in us.

Transformation according to Romans 12: 2 is not brought about by rules and regulations imposed from without as demand; it is brought about from within,

“by the renewing of your mind”. The mind is renewed as we get it occupied and filled with the perfect way in which the will of God came into expression in the life of Jesus. What an insight we get into the “good and acceptable and perfect will of God” as we see it all, and feed on it all, as carried out in every detail in that holy life! We see it there not as demand but as supply — as food for us. As we appropriate it, and are nourished by it, the will of God becomes blessed to us, and we learn increasingly to hate the action of our own will. We have a new way of thinking about everything then. If Christ has become food to me the pride, vanity, and fashion of this world are as dust under my feet. There is then spiritual vigour through what we feed on to be in accord with Christ — and to prove what is “the good and acceptable and perfect will of God”.

In Ephesians saints are viewed as having learned the Christ, and heard Him, and as having been instructed in Him according as the truth is in Jesus. And there we get the thought of “being renewed in the spirit of your mind” (Ephesians 4: 20 - 24). This is an even deeper assimilation to Christ than Romans 12. It was a very good mind that wanted Christ to be received (Luke 9: 54), but James and John needed to be renewed in the spirit of their minds! We can only get that renewing by feeding on Christ “in a holy place”. “The court of the tent of meeting” indicates that one is withdrawn in spirit from the sphere of human thoughts and activities, and even from what might be legitimately connected with one’s own tent. It is where priestly exercises are taken up in relation to God’s holy things. I suppose all believers have more or less of the exercises of piety in their own tents, but God would encourage us to take up exercises connected with the “holy place”.

We can have “the court of the tent of meeting” at home, but it suggests something quite distinct from what would be connected with our own tents as in the wilderness. Saints have the privilege of taking up many exercises at home which do not stand in relation to their own personal things, but to “the tent of meeting”. With some a very considerable part of their exercises has this character, and I think this indicates that they have priestly features. The general lack of strength for the service of God may be largely traced, I think, to the lack of priestly food.

The difference between the “manna” and the “oblation” as food is that manna is the supply of grace to enable the Israelite to meet all the exigencies of the wilderness pathway. This would answer more what we have spoken of in Romans. But the oblation is food to nourish priests so that they may have spiritual vigour to carry on the service of God in prayer and praise, and in everything that pertains to the testimony. The two exercises go on side by

side. We need manna for the wilderness path: we need to feed on the oblation for priestly strength in sanctuary service. Feeding on Christ as manna will give us renewal of mind, and strength to effect transformation of the responsible life. Feeding on Christ as the oblation will bring about renewal of the spirit of our mind, so that the very spirit of our minds will be formed in correspondence with Christ. There is great pleasure for God in that. The divine way of bringing it about is to give us Christ as food; it is a blessed and satisfying way.

The oblation is to be preserved unleavened. No fleshly or inflating element is to come in. "It is most holy". And it requires, and I think we may say produces, an intense degree of holiness in all who come in contact with it. "Whatever toucheth these shall be holy". There is nothing so sanctifying as having to do with Christ. We get apart from the world, and sin, and flesh when we are really engaged with Christ. "The Imitation of Christ" will never make any one like Him, but feeding on Him will, for it nourishes the affections and gives power. What are we nourishing our affections on? Is it Christ, or the worthless and passing trifles of the world?

The offering on the day of the priest's anointing is a "continual oblation". It is not like the voluntary gift of Leviticus 2, but is obligatory. The anointed priest must begin and end his day of holy service with an offering which presents the sweet odour of Christ's perfections to God. Only one day is contemplated, but it is "an everlasting statute"; each day of priestly service must begin and end thus. In chapter 2 the oblation has oil poured on it, or is mingled or anointed with oil, but here it is "saturated with oil" — a more intensive thought. The priest begins his day's service with a peculiarly strong apprehension of how fully the Spirit had His way in every detail of Christ's blessed pathway — all was in the energy and grace of the Holy Spirit. And he returns at the end of the day to take up the same apprehension with God again. A "day" which begins and ends thus will be filled with the fragrance of it for God's delight. The priest would serve with his spirit, and be acceptable in all that he did. And the offering is "wholly burned to Jehovah": it is a priestly apprehension of Christ which is wholly for God's delight.

The "baken pieces of the oblation" might indicate how God has been pleased that we should apprehend Christ. He has not put all in one Gospel, but has given us four. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John each had priestly apprehensions of Christ as the oblation but each had his own distinctive presentation. Men have often tried to merge the four Gospels in one account, but this sets aside the divine wisdom in which the beauty and perfection of Christ have been set before us and substitutes for it a human compilation in which there is no priestly intelligence, and in which the true features of the oblation are

obscured. There is nothing in which priestly discernment becomes more manifest than in the ability to perceive the differences in the Gospels, and to apprehend their significance. It is not the least part of God's favour to the assembly in these last days that He has given more priestly discrimination as to the different "pieces of the oblation". The divine presentation of Christ in the Gospels is wonderful. Everything that would have been natural in the Evangelists is held in abeyance. Can you think of *men* — merely men — writing an account of such matters in such few and simple words? Would not *men* have used abundance of adjectives, and expatiated on the wonders they had seen? But all that is absent. Each of the Evangelists has, in the sovereignty of God, his own spiritual apprehension of Christ, and presents it according to the wisdom of God, so that every incident, and the detail brought out in each incident, is contributory to, and forms an essential part of, the particular view of Christ which God would make prominent in each. There is spiritual and priestly intelligence in the presentation, and spiritual and priestly intelligence are needed for the apprehension of these precious features of Christ, and for their offering to God in the service of holy affections such as anointed priests can render.

The first thing in "the law of the sin-offering" is that "At the place where the burnt-offering is slaughtered shall the sin-offering be slaughtered before Jehovah". A sin-offering exercise comes in when there has been some allowance of the man who had to be removed in death, but the priest in taking it up has behind it in his soul the sense of the excellence of another Man, who has brought in everything that God could delight in, and in whose death every perfection has gone up in sweet savour. It is as knowing the perfect and eternal establishment of God's will in a Man wholly devoted to Him in death that the priest takes up exercise in regard to what has been displeasing to God.

In no other offering is holiness so emphasized as in this. Four times it is said about the sin-offering and the trespass-offering, "It is most holy". We are now brought to the abode of God's holiness, and we have to think of sin in the light of that. Even worldly people are shocked at certain things; the sense of propriety is offended; but this is not holiness. God requires holiness amongst His people; without it "no one shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12: 14).

The priest who offers the sin-offering has to eat it in a holy place — "in the court of the tent of meeting". He has a deep sense that something has come in of the man whom Christ died to remove. He views the sin from that standpoint, and makes it his own, and gets a fresh apprehension of the death of Christ as that in which the root of the sin has been dealt with. In mind and

spirit he is thus brought into accord with God; he feels about the sin as it ought to be felt about. Priestly strength and intelligence are needed for this. The priest who eats the sin-offering appropriates Christ in a way that puts him in real accord with Christ as to the sin or trespass, and as to the grace in which He took it up and made it His own. So that there is no lightness about sin, but a deep inward sense of what it cost Christ to deal with it; a sense, too, that it has been dealt with in divine holiness, but in pure and perfect grace towards the one who has sinned. The priest measures the sin by what it cost Christ to bear its judgment, but he is inwardly nourished upon the holy grace in which He did so. This brings about that there is found in the priest all that is morally suitable in regard to the sin, and this enables God to go on with His people in holiness and complacency.

Practically there is much amongst the people of God that needs the sin-offering, but God would not only give the sense of this, but He would have His priests formed inwardly in spiritual feelings and sensibilities as to it. There is a sense in which priests who eat the sin-offering make atonement. See Leviticus 10: 17. Atonement means *a covering*. In the full sense of atonement — the all-important sense — Christ is absolutely alone. In bearing the judgment of sin so as to put it away sacrificially from before God none can share with our precious Saviour, or have any part in His holy work of sin-bearing. Hence there is no eating of any sin-offering whose blood was brought into the sanctuary (verse 23). We could not possibly take up that side of things at all.

But if there has been sin amongst the people of God it is due to Him that it should be rightly felt about.

Christ not only bore the judgment of sin and put it away, but He had every right and divine sensibility about the sin which He removed sacrificially. He loved righteousness and hated lawlessness. In this the holy priesthood can have part, and it comes in as one eats the sin-offering. We have also to remember that the sin which may have come to light in another is an exposure of what is in ourselves according to flesh. It holds up a mirror to me to let me see what I am. But the priest judges all in spiritual sensibilities which are the result of feeding on Christ as the sin-offering. The sin has been there, but it has been rightly felt about by a priest who has measured it inwardly by the death of Christ, and this covers it morally. So that God goes on with His people in holiness, not passing over any sin as a light matter, but securing, not only that it should have been judged once for all in the death of Christ, but also that it should be measured morally in the light of that death, and rightly felt about in priestly exercise before Him. One would earnestly desire that more priestly ability to take up things in this way were found amongst the

people of God. It is often easier for us to *burn* the sin-offering than to *eat* it. See chapter 10: 16 - 18. That is, to act in a judicial spirit rather than to make the sin our own before God, as did Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel. (See Ezra 9, Nehemiah 9, Daniel 9) Eating brings about deep inward exercise, and it develops the sensibilities that we have spoken of, so that we do not think about sin merely as the world does, but according to God.

If there had been priestly sensibilities in the whole assembly at Corinth they would have been all down on their faces before God about the sin that was amongst them. But the exercises of Paul, and perhaps some few priests amongst themselves, saved the situation. One priest who eats the sin-offering might save many. One cannot but feel the deep importance of this in view of many things which come in amongst the people of God. If there were more priestly exercises there would be more power to deal with things, but this involves a breaking process, and much scouring and rinsing (verse 21). Paul went through this in a priestly way first, and ate the sin-offering for the Corinthians. Then they had their exercises; priestly sensibilities were revived; and things were dealt with so as to secure holy conditions.

Having to do with the sin-offering necessitates holiness. "Everything that toucheth the flesh thereof shall be holy". Contact with the sin-offering commits us to the refusal of man after the flesh, for in it that man, and all that pertains to him, was judged. One cannot be in contact with God's utter refusal of that man in the death of Christ, and go on with the allowance of him practically. The *garment* being washed on which the blood of the sin-offering is splashed would suggest an effect on the whole outward life — the deportment and ways — a moral cleansing and purification so that one appears as marked by purity and the beauty of holiness.

The "earthen vessel" would have reference to what man is naturally — to those things which might give him character, or place, or distinction as a man upon the earth. A man might be naturally eloquent, or have great mental powers, or some other natural gift which would give him a place as a man here. But if the sin-offering comes into contact with it, it results in the breaking of all that in the estimation of the man himself, so that he does not trust these things, but is cast upon God to be sustained by spiritual resources and power. "But we ourselves had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not have our trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead" (2 Corinthians 1: 9). "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassingness of the power may be of God, *and not from us*" (2 Corinthians 4: 7). Paul had been in contact with the sin-offering, and the "earthen vessel" was "broken" for him.

The "copper pot" might perhaps be suggestive of what saints are as begotten of God, or after the inward man. Viewed thus there is ability to endure testing, and to abide. "He that does the will of God abides for eternity" (1 John 2: 17). When the sin-offering comes into contact with what the saint is as the subject of divine working there is no breaking, but an exercise is raised as to moral suitability. So the scouring and rinsing with water have their place.

LEVITICUS 7

Leviticus 7

Though the law of the trespass-offering (verses 1 - 7) contains certain details which are not mentioned in the law of the sin-offering — the sprinkling of the blood on the altar round about, and the presentation and burning of the fat — its provisions are similar. "As the sin-offering, so is the trespass-offering; there shall be one law for them".

Then the priest's compensation for his service in connection with the three offerings is brought before us. As to the sin and trespass-offering "it shall be the priest's who maketh atonement therewith". The priest who presents "any man's burnt-offering" has the skin for himself. And every oblation baken in the oven, or prepared in the cauldron and the pan, "shall be the priest's who offereth it; to him it shall belong". There is always personal gain from taking up priestly exercise or rendering priestly service. One could not minister to the pleasure of God in relation to Christ without getting great gain for oneself. The offering priest acquires Christ for his own nourishment and satisfaction, or, in the case of the burnt-offering, he appropriates His outward blamelessness and beauty, with a view, probably, to being found invested with it. The skin would represent the outward moral beauty of Christ as it could be discerned by saints. *Inwardly* the priest is furnished with Christ as food, so that his affections and spiritual intelligence are nourished and strengthened in correspondence with Christ. And provision is also made for him to be marked by the possession of those *outward* features which marked Christ, "who did no sin neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when reviled, reviled not again; when suffering, threatened not; but gave himself over into the hands of him who judges righteously" (1 Peter 2: 21 - 23).

When the offering is typical of the perfection of Christ viewed as under testing (verse 9) it is to be the portion of the priest who offers it, but when His perfection is viewed simply in itself (verse 10) He becomes the food of "all the sons of Aaron ... one as the other". The appropriation of the perfection of Christ *as under testing* requires special exercise. There are special and personal exercises as well as those which we take up with our brethren. We learn to appreciate Christ in a peculiar way by our personal experiences, and this gives a certain distinctiveness to each saint. To offer that which speaks of Christ as under testing would suggest that the offerer had some reason to appreciate Him in that character. I think it would suggest that the offerer had been taught by his own experience under testing to value and love Christ in that aspect. Take some of the experiences of Christ as they are expressed in

the Psalms. They are not really appreciated until the soul has had, in some tiny measure, similar experiences. I suppose most of us know how a deep trial teaches us to see a sweetness and beauty in the scriptures that we have never seen before. God brings in Christ in relation to the way in which we are being tested, and we learn His perfection so as to become offerers and offering priests. The priest who offers takes up the product of such an exercise in a priestly way with God, and is thus morally entitled to have it as food for himself. But the oblation in a general sense — all that Christ was in His Personal perfection, and as wholly imbued with the Spirit — is common to “all the sons of Aaron”.

We have in chapters 6 - 7: 10 a cluster of priestly exercises which have to be taken up if the fellowship of God’s people is to be maintained on a proper footing. The whole tone and character of christian fellowship is lowered if it is taken up — or attempted to be taken up — without priestly conditions; that is, apart from the consideration of what is due to God. Priestly conditions and exercises were lacking amongst many at Corinth, and hence the fellowship was being compromised by unholy associations. “The law of the sacrifice of peace-offering” has in view the fellowship of the people of God.

The sin- and trespass-offerings come before the peace-offering so that we may be quite free. The sin-offering would relieve one of any necessity for *self-occupation*, and the trespass-offering deals with every element in connection with which the rights of God may have been infringed, or which would hinder communion *with one another*. In the institution of the offerings (chapters 1 - 5) the sin- and trespass-offerings come last. The end reached there is self-judgment and the adjustment of all wrongs God-ward or man-ward. But in the *law* of the offerings the peace-offering comes last. What is in view is the enjoyment of spiritual good in communion one with another. The law of the offerings is thus preparatory to our being intelligently partakers of the Lord’s table. 1 Corinthians 10 stands in connection with the peace-offering. Christians “partake of the Lord’s table”; it is what is provided for us which we can enjoy together; it is a well-furnished table, and it gives character to our fellowship here. If we are not true to the fellowship of the table according to 1 Corinthians 10 we shall not eat the supper according to 1 Corinthians 11. The fellowship is characterized by what we enjoy together in contrast to all that is in the idolatrous world. Partaking of the Lord’s table is preparatory to the privilege of the Lord’s supper. If a christian goes in for the enjoyments of the world he practically gives up the happiness that belongs to him as a partaker of the Lord’s table. The two things are so contrary to one another that it is impossible to enjoy both.

There is a festive character about the peace-offering. "And thou shalt sacrifice peace-offerings, and shalt eat there, and rejoice before Jehovah thy God" (Deuteronomy 27: 7). It suggests enjoyment in common; no one can be really festive alone; even the world has the idea of increasing happiness by sharing it; that is why they have parties, dinners, etc. "Bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry" (Luke 15: 23) has something of the thought of the peace-offering in it. Even our private exercises and discipline are in view of our enjoying more what we have in common with our brethren, and in view of our contribution to their joy. Paul and John knew what it was to be outwardly isolated, but they did not lose the gain of the fellowship, nor cease to contribute to it.

The first feature of the peace-offering is that it is "for a thanksgiving" (verse 12). It might well be so, seeing that we are set together in the presence of all that God is as known in blessing through Christ and through His death. When a man can say, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord", he is free. He has God before him instead of himself and his own wretchedness. He is conscious of having received the most wonderful good that was ever thought of. It has come to him from the heart of the blessed God through the death of the Lord Jesus. He can sit down with his brethren in the fellowship of the peace-offering. The better we know God through Christ the more thanksgiving there will be. The young convert can bring his peace-offering of thanksgiving, and he can share — if clean — in what others bring, and every advance he makes in the knowledge of Christ adds something to his offering, and to the common joy.

Let us test our happiness by asking, Did it come through the death of Christ? If not, let us beware lest there be an idolatrous element in it! All those things which we can enjoy together as the people of God have reached us through death, and if two or any number of hearts are enjoying those things, and the holy love which gave them, they can thank God with one accord. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of the Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10: 16). Our souls drink together into that infinite wealth of blessing — the revelation of God in love!

Then with "the sacrifice of thanksgiving" the offerer presents "unleavened cakes mingled with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and fine flour saturated with oil, cakes mingled with oil" (verse 12). There is not only the thought of the death of Christ, and of all that has come to us through that death, but a blessed apprehension of *the kind of Man* it was who died — One who knew no sin, and who was wholly in the grace and power of the Holy Spirit. Only that kind of Man will do for God; every other kind of man must be

displaced, so that the moral universe may be patterned after Christ. What an important element this is of the fellowship of saints! When Paul says "We all partake of that one loaf", I think he has a moral idea in his mind. It is the moral side that is prominent in 1 Corinthians 10, not merely the outward act of breaking bread, but what is morally involved in it. The fact that we break bread together, and partake of one loaf — which it supposes that all Christians do — suggests that every one in the fellowship has partaken morally of Christ. We have come to the apprehension of an entirely new order of man in Christ, and we have partaken of Him so as to be in the life of Christ morally. What I mean by that is that the moral features of Christ mark the saints as having His Spirit. For example, Christ was marked by obedience, dependence, separation from the idolatrous world, and by delight in the saints, the excellent of the earth. See Psalm 16.

Christian fellowship cannot be taken up in the flesh; it can only be taken up by those who have partaken of Christ, and are morally in His life. A lawless or independent and self-sufficient person is not suitable to the fellowship. If one finds his happiness in the idolatrous world, or prefers the company of relatives and unconverted people to that of the saints, he is not in the fellowship. The way to promote fellowship is to give more place to the features of Christ. The partnership then becomes very real and spiritual. The saints become "one loaf, one body" (1 Corinthians 10: 17), as expressing together what is of Christ. In the light of this one can understand the important place which the unleavened cakes and wafers and fine flour and oil have in relation to the peace-offering.

But then there is also "his offering of leavened bread" (verse 13). This implies the recognition and acknowledgment of what we are in ourselves. If, on the one hand, the offerer is a partaker of Christ, he is, on the other, conscious that he is still in "mixed condition", and that the flesh is still in him. He cannot say that he has no sin (1 John 1: 8). So he brings "his offering of leavened bread". This is essential to the peace-offering. It secures a spirit of lowliness and self-distrust, and leads one to walk softly. "Let him that thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall". And if a fault comes to light in another the spiritual are to restore him in a spirit of meekness "considering thyself lest thou also be tempted" (Galatians 6: 1). In relation to the fellowship one is never to lose sight of this. It keeps us sober as to ourselves, and considerate and forbearing as to others.

Then "the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace-offering of thanksgiving shall be eaten the same day that it is presented" (verse 15). The eating is not to be separated far from the offering. It is serious to consider that what began as a true offering of thanksgiving or a vow may degenerate into what is "an

unclean thing" (verse 18). It shows the importance of maintaining a close link between what we enjoy together, and the consciousness of holding it in relation to God. The "peace-offering of thanksgiving" must be renewed each day if the daily eating or communion is to retain its holy character. This is not grievous to the spiritual mind, for the true sweetness and power of what we enjoy together lies in the fact that we have taken it up first *with* God. And it is a very sweet privilege to come afresh to the altar with our peace-offering each day, and renew *with God* for His pleasure our apprehensions and appreciations of Christ. If this is neglected we cannot wonder if the "fellowship with one another" loses its holy and spiritual character, and becomes formal or even merely social. The true joy of the communion is lost. The love of God comes out in this, that He would not have us to go on enjoying together indefinitely that which we have once taken up at the altar with Him. He would have us daily to renew our apprehensions of Christ *with Him*, and to find in this a continually fresh starting-point for our communion with our brethren. Otherwise our enjoyments may be separated from their true Source, and their spiritual value lost.

In the case of a "vow or voluntary" offering (verse 16) the flesh may be eaten also on the next day. This supposes greater spiritual energy in the affections of the offerer, and therefore greater ability to sustain the communion. There may be not only different measures of apprehension of Christ as set forth in the different animals offered, but also a difference in the strength of motive which lies behind the offering.

We can only enjoy things with God at all as we are in the spirit of "thanksgiving". "In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus towards you". Thanksgiving is the response to the wealth of blessing which divine grace has brought us into. But when we come to the "vow", or what is "voluntary", it suggests spiritual power for dedication to God. It implies a more distinct subjective work in the soul. Hence communion can be more sustained. There is often true response to the grace of God in grateful affections without much spiritual energy, and therefore things may soon deteriorate into merely human sentiment which is "unclean". The remedy for this is to continually renew the apprehension of Christ in movements of heart God-ward. If we do so it will inevitably carry us on from "thanksgiving" to "vow". We shall increase in spiritual capability, and be more efficient contributors to the fellowship.

God loves the definite dedication which is implied in a "vow", and spiritual power is found with those who bring an offering of this character. A true "vow" is in the power of the Spirit; it is no mere resolution of the flesh or the legal

man. It is the happy dedication of a spiritual man. Many saints do not go beyond the "peace-offering of thanksgiving", but God contemplates His people being so affected by His grace and love that there will be purpose of heart to bring about dedication to Him. God supports this, and the one who has it gets the gain of it. If there is a spirit of dedication it secures divine support. A truly dedicated man would not talk about his dedication; it would be enough for him that his "vow" was acceptable to God, and that the grace of God supported him in it. The gain of a "vow" in relation to the peace-offering is that there is extended ability to continue participation in the fellowship without things becoming "unclean" from lack of conscious nearness to God.

"The law of the sacrifice of peace-offering" emphasizes the necessity for cleanness on the part of those who eat. See verses 19 - 21. Later in this book we get much instruction as to the clean and the unclean, that we may know what to keep apart from. Holy things are profaned if there is not purity as to ourselves and our associations. "The soul that eateth the flesh of the sacrifice of peace-offering which is for Jehovah, having his uncleanness upon him, that soul shall be cut off from his peoples". The attempt to bring uncleanness and Christ together ends disastrously. God will not allow it.

The prohibition against eating fat and blood (verses 22 - 27) is very significant: both are reserved. The unique excellence which attaches to the Person of Christ is very jealously guarded by God, and also the unique value of His blood as making atonement. One would not hesitate a moment about severing one's links with any person or persons who did not maintain the truth as to the Person of Christ, or as to His atoning death. There is a reserved portion of delight — an excellence and richness attaching to Christ — which is exclusively for God. It is an essential feature of our communion that we should understand this. If a divine Person comes into Manhood and goes into death there must be an excellence disclosed that is beyond the creature to appropriate. But if it cannot be *eaten* it can be *offered*; it becomes the subject of worship. The fat is twice spoken of in chapter 3 as the "food [or bread] of the offering"; it is Jehovah's portion; that which He alone can appropriate. The priest can send up the sweet odour to God of that which it is not for him to appropriate; it is burnt "on the altar upon the burnt-offering". We can *contemplate* what is not given to us to *appropriate*. It does not diminish the joy to know this. God loves to participate in the joy of His people, and, indeed, to have the richest portion in that which is the Substance of their communion. It is an added joy to know that the blessed God has that in the Fatted Calf which is beyond what the returned sons get. It is killed for them, but the Father has His own peculiar portion in it.

The blood is reserved also, and chapter 17 tells us why. The life of the flesh is in the blood, and it is given upon the altar to make atonement, "for it is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul". That is the aspect of the blood generally in the Old Testament. But in the New Testament the Lord speaks of the cup in His supper as "the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you" (Luke 22: 20), and He gives that cup to His saints to drink. The blood still retains all its blessed character and efficacy as having atoning value; it is a perfect covering for sin; but we know it also as bearing witness to all the blessing in the heart of God which has come to light through the revelation of God in the love of the new covenant. The word *atonement* occurs many times in the Old Testament, but it does not occur in the New.

"Atonement" in Romans 5: 11, A.V., should be "reconciliation". God revealing what is in His heart is more than covering men's sin. In blessing the cup, and drinking it, we are not occupied with the covering or atoning value of the blood, but with what is witnessed or revealed in it.

The closing section of this chapter requires of the offerer that "his own hands shall bring Jehovah's offerings by fire, *the fat with the breast* shall he bring" (verse 30). God would have us to hold in a very definite and personal way the apprehension of all that excellence in Christ which is His own peculiar portion and delight, but He would have us to hold it along with a precious sense of the love of Christ. The more definitely we hold the unfathomable depth and preciousness of what there is in Christ for God, the more shall we apprehend the love of Christ. The fat and the breast are to be together in the offerer's hands. The Person who is so delightful to God, and in whom there are such inscrutable excellencies that God alone can feed upon them, is known to us in His affections. One can understand the Apostle, when praying that we might know the love of the Christ, adding, "which surpasses knowledge" (Ephesians 3: 19). He had in his hands "the fat with the breast", and the surpassing character of the love was connected with all the intrinsic wealth and worth of that glorious Person as known of the Father. To fail to hold the "fat" would be to fail, correspondingly, to hold the "breast". What "holy hands" are needed to hold such infinite preciousness! And emphasis seems to be laid on "his own hands". This is not looking to enjoy what others bring, or complaining of the lack in others! What are you bringing with your "own hands" to contribute to the pleasure of God, and to priestly food, and to the common joy of the fellowship?

The "breast" is waved before the priests eat it. They eat in the consciousness of how God delights in the love of Christ being known and appropriated by His saints. And the "breast" would speak of His love God-ward as well as saint-

ward and to the assembly. He loved His "master" as well as His "wife" and His "children" (Exodus 21: 5). "I love the Father, and as the Father has commanded me, thus I do" (John 14: 31). Indeed Christ loves His saints, and loves the assembly, because it is the Father's will that He should do so. Have you thought that it really pleases God that His Son should love you and give Himself for you? The waving of the "breast" would mean that the love of Christ has been taken up by the saints in relation to all the pleasure that God has in it, and their affections move before God in the appreciation of it. It is because of His love to the Father that Christ has so devoted Himself to His saints. He was daily Jehovah's delight — "the nursling of his love" — but He was so as "rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth", and as having His "delights with the sons of men" (Proverbs 8: 30, 31). It is a peculiar pleasure to God when the love of Christ is appreciated by the saints in relation to His delight in it. When that moves in their affections it answers to the waving of the "breast".

The "breast" is given as food to "Aaron and his sons". The love of Christ is the common portion of the priesthood; it does not belong to one more than another. But as being food it becomes characteristic of the person who eats it; it forms him spiritually. The divine thought is wonderful — that there should be a priesthood so nourished upon the love of Christ that they take character from it! The effect of eating the "breast" would be that we should love as Christ loved, and God would have everything in priestly service moved by that mighty mainspring. "A new commandment I give to you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13: 34). "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15: 12). But one must really be nourished by the love of Christ to do this. Paul knew what it was to eat the "breast of the wave-offering", and he was marked by the love of Christ; it was the mainspring of all his devoted service. He loved as Christ loved, and all his service was of priestly character; there was something distinctively *for God* in it.

Then "the right shoulder" becomes the portion of the priest who presents the peace-offering. It is thus connected with a personal exercise like the oblation baken in the oven, or prepared in the cauldron or the pan (verse 9). It seems to indicate that the priestly presentation of the peace-offering is an exercise which secures a special personal knowledge of the character of Christ's walk here. ("Shoulder" is really "leg"; it would refer to the strength of His walk.) The offering priest not only has the "breast" in common with his brethren, but he has a peculiar and personal sense of how Christ walked here in the service of love. And he gets the "shoulder" as food so that he may have spiritual strength "even as *he* walked, himself also so to walk" (1 John 2: 6). So that

what was true in Christ may become true in him (1 John 2: 8). How could one walk as Christ walked except as nourished and strengthened by feeding on "the shoulder of the heave-offering"? He ever walked in the blessed activity and service of love. How marvellous that He should become food for us that we might, in some small measure, love as He loved, and walk as He walked! What broken and contrite hearts we ought to have that we have so little entered upon our priestly privilege of eating the breast and the shoulder, and the result has been that we have so very, very feebly, if at all, loved as He loved, and walked as He walked!

There is a priestly side of the truth connected with our fellowship, and if that priestly side is not taken up the fellowship will not be maintained in its true character, or in the spiritual energy which rightly marks it. How sad that so many believers should look at these types as belonging to a past dispensation, and now past and done with! The truth is they are precious instruction for us, and divinely intended to be so. They are instruction in Christ and in the knowledge of God. May the Lord enable us to consider these things, and if we do so He will give us understanding!

LEVITICUS 8

Leviticus 8

God would have all His people to be interested in priesthood, and instructed in what pertains to it; so He tells Moses to "Take Aaron and his sons with him, and ... gather all the assembly together at the entrance of the tent of meeting" (verse 3). Aaron was called by God to the honour of priesthood (Hebrews 5: 4); his sons came into it as being kindred with him. And "the Christ also has not glorified himself to be made a high priest". The One who said to Him,

"Thou art my Son", said also, "Thou art a priest". He has taken up the priestly office by God's appointment, and in Hebrews He is the only One who is called a priest. The Spirit of God is drawing attention in that part of Scripture to CHRIST as the "merciful and faithful high priest in things relating to God" (Hebrews 2: 17), as the "High Priest of our confession" (3: 1), as the "great high priest who has passed through the heavens" (4: 14), as the "priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedec" (5: 6, etc.), as "high priest of the good things to come" (9: 11), and as "a great priest over the house of God" (10: 21). But it is made clear that He has a sanctified company of brethren who are "all of one" with Him (2: 11), and it is as being so that the saints are "a spiritual house, a holy priesthood" (1 Peter 2: 5). Though *their* priesthood is not formally taught in Hebrews it is implied in drawing nigh to God, and approaching God, and in having boldness for entering into the holy of holies, and in the offering of the sacrifice of praise (Hebrews 7: 19, 25; Hebrews 10: 19; Hebrews 13: 15).

There are those who are kindred with Christ. "Take Aaron and his sons with him". It is not sons of Adam that are seen here, but sons of Aaron. That is, it is the saints viewed not according to what they are naturally, but according to what they are spiritually as the result of the working of God. I trust we know what it is to have been attracted to Christ. We see the power of the attraction of Christ in the Gospels, and how different ones responded; the two disciples who heard John speak, and Simon, and Philip, and Nathaniel, and many others. When Christ was presented they were attracted; there was that in them which was kindred with Christ; a magnet only attracts what is kindred to itself. The disciples were attracted to Christ, and became attached to Him; nothing would induce them to give Him up. In listening to Him, and following Him, they were doing the will of God, and He recognized them as His brethren. See Matthew 12: 46 - 50; Mark 3: 35; Luke 8: 21. Such are bound

up with Christ eternally. You may find flaws in the saints if you look for them, but they appreciate Christ, and that shows that they are kindred with Him.

"Aaron and *his sons with him*". Through infinite grace we are bound up with Christ, not only in God's purpose — though that lies behind all — but in affection which is the product of God's working in our souls. *Believing* in John's Gospel is the believing of affection; the heart has found an Object in whom it can rest. When that is so every detail connected with Christ becomes of greatest interest to the heart. How the bride in Canticles delights to speak of every feature of the Bridegroom! She loves to dwell on every detail. To such a heart the chapter before us would have profound interest.

The reader is referred to "An Outline of the Book of Exodus" — chapters 28, 29 — for remarks on the priestly garments, and the consecration offerings. The chapters in Exodus give us Jehovah's commandment as to what was to be done; Leviticus 8 describes how Moses, as the one faithful in all God's house, carried it out. All leads to Aaron and his sons keeping the charge of Jehovah at the entrance of the tent of meeting as nourished on the flesh of the ram of consecration, and on the bread of consecration. This is typical of the assembly as the consecrated company. The consecration-offering comes as near to that aspect of the Lord's death which is before us in His supper as anything in the Old Testament. His body devoted in love to the will of God and for the assembly, so that every thought of the divine pleasure might take effect and be known in our hearts as the fruit of infinite love. The result would be that we should "keep the charge" during the seven days which are typical of the whole period of priestly service; everything would be maintained that is due to the Lord's Name. It is not here the privilege of *going in* with Him to share the relationship in which He stands to His Father and His God, now known as our Father and our God, but rather the privilege and holy responsibility of keeping the charge "at the entrance of the tent of meeting". It is the maintenance in faithfulness here of what is due to Him during the time of His rejection — having part with Him in faithfulness to His interests here. We eat the Lord's supper on the Lord's day in view of complete identification with the interests and testimony of Christ all through the week. John 13 - John 17 contemplates Christ going to the Father, but leaving His own here to "keep the charge" — to have part with Him in that testimony which He brought here. The Father made known, the love of Christ revealed, the Comforter given, the intercession of Christ, and the mutual affections and service of the saints, all come in with relation to keeping the charge! Keeping the charge is "until he come"!

LEVITICUS 9

Leviticus 9

The "eighth day" is the beginning of a new period, but looked at as in relation to the seven preceding days. It has in view the appearing of Jehovah and His glory (verses 4, 6, 23). All that goes on during this present period has in view "the world to come", when the glory of God will appear publicly, and "all the house of Israel" will come under priestly blessing. The answer to the offerings in this chapter is the grace that will be brought to the people of God at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1: 13). All the blessing of God is coming out in its fulness; His glory will appear publicly; His acceptance of the offering of Christ will be publicly known and delighted in.

The scene at the end of this chapter is, typically, the public appearance in this world of the glory of Jehovah, and His grace and blessing as founded on, and as the adequate answer to; the sin-offering, the burnt-offering, the oblation, and the peace-offering. In the early chapters of this book we have seen in type how God is exercising His saints, individually and collectively, at the present time in the apprehension and appreciation of Christ in these varied characters. But what a joy to know that the value of Christ in all these different aspects is to be publicly known in this world, and is to have its public answer in blessing here, and in the out-shining of all that God is in supreme and infinite grace!

It is here that Aaron appears for the first time as an offering priest. So that what is before us in this chapter is Christ Himself as offering, and the wonderful result of His offering in the appearance of the glory of God. Indeed, we see here "the sufferings which belonged to Christ, and the glories after these" (1 Peter 1: 11). The peculiar character of the present moment lies in the fact that it anticipates spiritually, and in the way of testimony, what will be publicly known when Christ appears. To speak in the language of this type, the sacrifices have been offered, and Moses and Aaron have gone in, but they have not yet come out. The time of the *public* blessing of the house of Israel, and of men universally, has not yet come. Christ has not yet come out, but another divine Person, the Holy Spirit, *has* come out — though unseen and unknown by men — to empower the priestly company here to make known in the way of testimony the glory of God in grace. The gospel is the answer now to the precious value of the sacrifice of Christ. It is the appearing in testimony of all that God is as made known in grace and blessing on the ground of the death of Christ. So that while this chapter looks on to the time when the results of the death of Christ will be known in public and universal blessing,

when Christ as King and Priest will appear again, it also speaks of what is now here consequent upon the coming of the Spirit. At the present time the gospel is the fruit and answer to the offering of Christ; the glory of God in grace appears in it.

Aaron offers for himself and for the people (verse 7). That indicates typically that Christ is with God now, not only on the ground of His Personal title, but on the ground of His death. On the ground of His Personal title He could be there alone, but we could not be with Him. But He is there on the ground that He has been once offered; He has died to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and to establish the will of God; He has brought all His infinite perfections into the place of sin and death. "By his own blood" He "has entered in once for all into the holy of holies, having found an eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9: 12). That is, He has taken His place as Man with God on the same ground as is available for all His people. If *He* is with God as having offered Himself, it is the same ground on which we can be with God. If He had only entered in in His Personal perfection each one of us would have to say, "I cannot be with Him". But if He is there as having been offered I say, "Blessed be God! on that ground I can be there too". He loves, as the true Aaron, to be with God on ground which is available "for the people" also.

In this chapter Aaron presents all the offerings and then he blesses the people. That was the attitude of Christ when He rose from the dead. The sacrificial work was over, and in resurrection He "lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them". He went to heaven with hands uplifted in blessing (Luke 24: 50, 51). The result of the offering and sacrifice is widely extended blessing. We see that in Psalm 22 where we get first, "My brethren ... the congregation" — the assembly as answering to Aaron's sons; then "the great congregation" — speaking of "the whole house of Israel"; and finally "all the ends of the earth".

It is of much interest to see how "the sons of Aaron" appear in this chapter as presenting the blood to Aaron, and delivering the burnt-offering to him. They are sympathetic with all that he does, and, we might say, co-operating with him in it. It suggests the assembly as a company with understanding of the necessity for Christ offering Himself, and who are intelligent as to His offering, and as to the fruit of it. Before the moment when the public result of that offering will fill the world with blessing at the "appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2: 13), the assembly is in accord with Christ as to His offering work, and as to all that will result from it in the blessing of Israel and of all the ends of the earth. This makes the priestly company evangelical today, as being in sympathetic accord with the true

Aaron. The glory of God in grace is appearing now in the testimony of the glad tidings, and the priestly company is in accord with it. The offering of Christ has secured that the glory of God can shine out in grace, and man can be blessed in a way that is commensurate with that glory. It is a marvellous thing to preach the gospel, for it is a setting forth of the glory of God in grace. Many preachers weaken their testimony by dwelling almost exclusively on the benefit of man. The true evangelical testimony is "Behold your God!" (Isaiah 35: 4; Isaiah 40: 9). The true evangelist serves in a priestly spirit (see Romans 15: 16); he considers for God. If there were more fidelity in keeping the charge (Leviticus 8: 35) there would be a more powerful and spiritual setting forth of the gospel. There would be more accord with Christ as to the testimony of grace. What is the present attitude of Christ? It is set forth in verse 22. The offering work is finished, and the true Aaron has hands uplifted in blessing. All may come under those Priestly hands; all may be blessed according to the delight and glory of God as secured by the offering of Christ in its varied aspects.

Then He has gone in as Lord and Priest. This chapter says nothing of what He does within. That is the assembly's secret as identified with Him within! But another divine Person has come out to be the power of the present testimony of grace. See 1 Peter 1: 12. God's glory in blessing will shine forth in the world to come to the ends of the earth: but it is shining forth today in the testimony of His grace by the Holy Spirit. Christ is the true Moses in Romans 5 — the Mediator through whom all God's blessing comes to men; He is the true Aaron in Hebrews 9 — the "high priest of the good things to come"; things which *have come* now spiritually. He will come forth in manifested glory and blessing very soon.

"We look for Thine appearing,
Thy presence here to bless!"

It will be publicly and universally known then that His offering has been accepted, and that on the ground of it the glory of God can appear and cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. But in the meantime the Holy Spirit has come down and rested on men as cloven tongues of fire to give a powerful voice in this world to the glory of God in grace. The blessing of God for men today is according to the value of the Person and offering of Christ.

These precious types are full of instruction, but Christianity transcends even what is so wondrously pictured here. For the consecrated company today are not only entrusted with the holy "charge" at the entrance of the tent — their testimony here to what will soon be in display — but they are privileged to go

in even to the holy of holies, to know in the greatest nearness to God the blessedness of Christ as His Resource for the bringing to pass of His will and glory in the whole moral universe.

LEVITICUS 10

Leviticus 10

This chapter shows us the failure of priesthood in Aaron's two elder sons, but it also shows in "his sons that were left" how the priesthood was to be maintained in a remnant. So that we see here what answers to present conditions. There has been grievous public failure characterized by the introduction of "strange" elements which do not belong at all to the divine system. In that system, as we have seen in type in the tabernacle, every detail was to be "as Jehovah had commanded". But Nadab and Abihu "presented strange fire before Jehovah, which he had not commanded them".

It is significant that it had been said, "*And ye shall not go out* from the entrance of the tent of meeting seven days, until the day when the days of your consecration are at an end: for seven days shall ye be consecrated" (8: 33). This is connected with keeping the charge. Everything that is of God, all that speaks of Christ and the Spirit, all that is the result of divine grace and working in the saints, is within the divine system. We have to keep the charge — to confess the sufficiency of what is within — and to see that no foreign element is introduced.

It seems evident that Nadab and Abihu went outside for their strange fire, and this has been the secret of all the failure. To bring in outside elements is ruinous. I understand that Nadab means "Liberal"! He represents the popular liberal spirit that would regard restriction to the Lord's commandment, and to what is spiritual, as narrow-minded and bigoted. Abihu means "He is my father". This would suggest a claim to be in relationship with God, such as is often now found without the moral conditions which are essential to relationship. There is much said today about the Fatherhood of God, but very little thought of what is suitable to Him.

"Strange fire" is what is of the world or of the flesh introduced into the service of God, where nothing really has place but what is of the Spirit of God.

"Strange fire" would be a human imitation of what is divine. There would be great danger of this if a man were not saying "Lord" to Jesus. That does not mean merely using the word "Lord", but being in the truth and spirit of it; it is the setting aside of man's will and importance in presence of His supremacy. Then, again, to be divinely preserved from what is "strange" there must be the confession of "Jesus Christ come in flesh". A divine Person come in Manhood to be the Beginning of everything for God! This involves the complete setting aside of man after the flesh. These are God-given tests (see 1 Corinthians 12:

3; 1 John 4: 1 - 3), and the action of the Spirit or what is "strange" would be evidenced by the presence or absence of these confessions.

The introduction of "strange fire" involves the death of priesthood. In Christendom generally priesthood is dead in a moral sense. I could not say precisely when this took place historically, but very early in the history of the church human elements were introduced; things were brought into the service of God which were not according to divine institution, but according to what pleased men.

The act of Nadab and Abihu — Aaron's two elder sons — is a type of the public failure of the priesthood as committed to man's responsibility. I think it can be spiritually discerned that publicly the priesthood has failed, and has come under the judgment of the Lord. But notwithstanding this God would have the full thought of priesthood to be maintained by the two younger sons. Eleazar means "God is helper", and in him and his brother we see, typically, a remnant in whom the priesthood is maintained by God's help.

The public failure would naturally discourage and dishearten, and lead to giving up divine thoughts. But we have to see to it that we do not uncover our heads nor rend our clothes (verse 6). The "high caps" speak of holy dignity, the clothes of moral suitability to God, and the anointing oil of power and competency in the Spirit. The thought of a remnant in Scripture is not a fag end of secondary value, but a bit of the original; it includes all that is really for God. All saints constitute the remnant today, though all may not take up or maintain the priestly character which attaches to them according to the will of God. Verses 6 and 7 are encouragement to maintain true priestly exercises and conditions in spite of the public failure. It is right that "the whole house of Israel" should bewail what has happened, but neither the holy dignity nor the moral suitability of the priesthood is to be laid aside; the anointing remains as power.

These two exercises are left to us in a day of most serious public failure; *outside* we bewail the breakdown and the judgment; but *within* we may, and must, maintain with God all that is priestly. As to the public position we can only bow in confession of the failure, but in relation to what is divine and spiritual the holy service of God is to be carried on; there is to be no discouragement. It says in verse 7, "Lest ye die". The priesthood may die through the exercise of *will* as in Nadab and Abihu, or it may die by being given up through *weakness*. Naturally we might be so affected by the public failure that we surrender priestly conditions ourselves. The tendency might be to say, "It is all over; things are in such a state that it is no good trying to maintain anything"; and everything priestly for God might be let go. But God

would have priestly conditions maintained by you and me and all saints. We are to be found spiritually superior to the natural effect of things, and thus true overcomers. Discouragement leads to uncovering the head and rending the clothes. To "bewail the burning" is a right exercise for the people of God, but at the same time priestly dignity and state, and the holy functions of the priesthood, are to be preserved, not surrendered. 2 Timothy was written by Paul after the public failure was fully manifested to encourage Timothy and ourselves to maintain things spiritually for God. The help of God remains, and is available for us.

"Lest wrath come on all the assembly" (verse 6). It would be a dreadful thing if priestly service ceased. But if a few saints maintain priestly conditions, and are found continually presenting the preciousness of Christ before God, and praying for all saints and all men, things are maintained for the good of "all the assembly".

Then two *everlasting statutes* come in which are of permanent importance. "Thou shalt not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, and thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tent of meeting, lest ye die" (verses 9 - 11). The first tendency in presence of public failure is to be discouraged and disheartened. Then, on the other hand, there may be a resorting to that which excites and stimulates in a natural way. There is often a sense of spiritual weakness, and an attempt to make up for it by some kind of natural stimulant. But the bringing in of such things clouds spiritual discernment, and leads to failure in distinguishing "between the holy and the unholy, and between unclean and clean". And if we cannot distinguish we cannot teach.

This section coming in here would suggest that probably Nadab and Abihu had sinned while under the influence of wine or strong drink. Religious excitement, the exhilarating effect of music, eloquence, and other influences which act on natural sensibilities, are to be avoided if we would preserve spiritual conditions which are suitable to God. Such things only cause people to lose spiritual discernment. Do you think that a person who went in for "Pleasant Sunday Afternoons" and concerts would be able to distinguish between strange fire and divine fire? The priesthood is entirely spiritual, and has to do with a spiritual order of things. It can only be carried on outside the sphere of natural discouragement and natural exhilaration. There are many things which excite nature that would not do violence to the natural conscience, nor even to the unenlightened conscience of a believer. We have to seek divine instruction as to such things, and beware of them, if we would keep ourselves in holy and priestly condition.

The other "everlasting statute" (verse 15), refers to what remains as a positive source of satisfaction and strength for the priesthood, and the priestly family, despite all the failure that has come in. There are "sons" left to eat priestly food, and there is "the oblation that is left" for them to eat (verse 12). "The oblation" is typical, as we have already seen, of all the blessedness and perfection of Christ as found here in holy Manhood for the pleasure and glory of God. If we consider Him we shall find that there was no discouragement there by reason of man's failure, for it is written, "He shall not faint nor be in haste (or be crushed) till he have set justice in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law" (Isaiah 42: 4). Neither shall we find any natural exhilaration there; He was a true Nazarite to God. In the oblation all was unleavened; there was no corrupting or inflating element present. All that Christ was here for the delight of God is "left" to be "most holy" food for the priesthood in a day of departure and ruin. It is to be eaten "beside the altar", which suggests preparedness to suffer; for the altar would speak of a suffering Christ, and of a sacrificial spirit in the priesthood as being near to it. Manhood in the power and grace of the Holy Spirit, as seen in Christ, is God's delight, but it is not acceptable to men. It has the place of suffering and reproach here. The oblation is to be eaten in "a holy place".

Then "the breast of the wave-offering, and the shoulder of the heave-offering shall ye eat in a clean place, thou, and thy sons, and thy daughters with thee" (verse 14). This is the priestly part of the peace-offerings, and it is shared by all the priestly family — daughters as well as sons. The "daughters" would represent those who are spiritually weaker than "sons"; the female is a weaker vessel (1 Peter 3: 7). But this does not debar them from feeding on the love of Christ, or appropriating His grace for strength of walk. The "holy place", where the oblation is to be eaten, would have a sanctuary reference, but the "clean place" would refer to the purity of our associations as in the fellowship. And the households of the saints would be a "clean place" from which the contaminating influences of the world are excluded. Personally, and in our households, we have to maintain separation from all that is idolatrous and unclean, so that there may be a "clean place" where the wave-breast and the heave-shoulder can be eaten.

All this remains as an "everlasting statute" in spite of the public breakdown of the priesthood. There is a remnant "left" to maintain things by the help of God. The anointing remains; Christ remains in all His perfection as set forth in the oblation; the fellowship remains, too, with its precious sources of satisfaction and strength in the love and power of Christ. As we avail ourselves of these things the priesthood, and all the conditions suitable to the service of God, will be maintained in the vigour of life. So that this chapter, solemn and

exercising as it is, is really most encouraging as showing how divine resources are "left" to us in the day of failure, and that priestly service may be continued for the pleasure of God. May we be enabled to take it up, by God's grace, in faith and love, and with all the spiritual exercise that is becoming!

But there is another important lesson ere this section of the book closes! The goat of the sin-offering should have been eaten by "the sons of Aaron that were left", but instead of that it had been burnt! This is not the first and public failure, as seen in the Christian profession generally, but it is failure in the reserved and preserved remnant. This has a serious voice for us as indicating a failure that is very likely to be found in a preserved remnant. I think it indicates where we *do* very often fail.

Moses "diligently sought the goat of the sin-offering". It was a matter of great concern to him to know how it had been dealt with. "The people" (9: 15), "the assembly" (10: 17), had a great place in Moses' heart; he was one who had known what it was to bear their iniquity on his spirit before Jehovah — precious type of Him who took it all upon Himself not only in priestly affection and solicitude, but as the actual sin-offering. If we are in sympathy with the thoughts of Christ we shall feel the state of the people of God, and shall realize the necessity that exists for the sin-offering. And we shall not only have a divine estimate of the departure and failure, but we shall eat the sin-offering. We shall identify ourselves with the sin of the people in the grace of Him who has been in the truest and fullest way the Sin-offering for them. This is priestly privilege of a "most holy" character. What spirituality — what nearness to Christ — what freedom from self-occupation and self-consideration does it demand! Alas! must we not own that we are much like Aaron and his sons in this matter? We fail to meet the mind of the Lord, and to be in sympathy with the heart of Christ, as to the state and sin of the assembly at large, and as to the grace which would do in spirit what Christ did actually and sacrificially — that is, make the sin of the people our own. I believe that one result of our not feeling the state of the assembly in priestly sensibilities, and in accord with the sin-offering aspect of Christ's death, is that we have to be made to feel it personally, and the sorrow and suffering of it, by coming into contact with it in those with whom we walk. It is sometimes as though the Lord said, "If you do not feel the failure of the assembly sympathetically with me, you shall feel it, and know the sorrow of it, in your own associations".

It is easier to *burn* the sin-offering than to *eat* it. There may be righteous indignation against evil, and a dealing with it in a judicial spirit, which wholly fails in this priestly element which so honours God, and which brings the priesthood into such intimate accord with the death of Christ. We may judge

evil, and withdraw from it, without ever making it our own in a priestly way. The maintenance of what is due to the Lord is most important. Things that are evil must be dealt with according to the holiness that becomes God's house. But in what spirit is discipline to be exercised in whatever form it becomes necessary? It is to be exercised in the spirit of those who have made the sin their own in confession before God. We may judge with a legal severity and hardness which is not in keeping with a dispensation pre-eminently marked by priestly grace, and under which the restoration of the offender is always the end in view. But to eat the sin-offering would be to estimate the sin according to God, and according to the death of Christ which was necessary to put it away, but so to make it our own that our spirits are entirely free from harshness or hardness, but are in accord with the grace in which Christ became the Sin-offering.

Aaron was under the pressure of his own exercises, and of the severe discipline of God upon himself; he was not sufficiently at leisure from himself to eat the sin-offering. He had so much trouble and sorrow of his own that he was not free to take up the exercise that the whole state of Israel called for. Is it not often so with ourselves? "Such things have befallen me". Aaron did not excuse himself; he owned his weakness and inability, and when he did so "Moses heard it; and it was good in his sight".

It is part of priestly responsibility and privilege to take up the exercise of eating the sin-offering for the people of God — the assembly. "He has given it to you that ye might bear the iniquity of the assembly, to make atonement for them before Jehovah". It is much to the Lord to be able to look down and see even a few hearts that feel about the sin of the assembly as it ought to be felt about, and in accord with His own death for that sin. But Aaron here represents those who have a sense of what ought to be, and of what is suitable to God, but who have to confess inability to take it up. I would not speak for others, but personally I think this is about as far as one could go. If so, it is better to own it. The Lord can bear with confessed weakness and failure; He cannot support pretension. It is a beautiful touch of tender grace that when Moses heard it, "it was good in his sight". The Lord has often to be satisfied, if one may so say, with a measure of exercise and spirituality that comes short of what His heart desires. He would have us to be sympathetic with Him as to "the iniquity of the assembly", and to bear it in our spirits. He looks for this. May He give us grace to eat the sin-offering! Or, at any rate, to own how becoming it is that we should do so, and to confess with lowly hearts how little spiritual ability we have for this function of the holy priesthood!

It is striking and suggestive that this very comprehensive section of the book — dealing with the priesthood in its original institution, in its normal characteristics, in its failure, in its continuance through God's help in a remnant after the public failure — should end on the note that is struck in the closing verses of the chapter! May its lesson not be overlooked or forgotten!

LEVITICUS 11

Leviticus 11

We come in this chapter to what concerns “the children of Israel” generally. They were to hallow themselves and be holy because Jehovah was holy. “I am Jehovah who brought you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy” (verses 44, 45). Do we value the privilege of having God — of possessing Him as *our God*? The instruction of this chapter is given so that nothing may interfere with this. The corresponding passage in Deuteronomy 14 begins by saying, “Ye are sons of Jehovah your God”. Therefore we must be careful not to eat anything, in a moral sense, that would give us a character inconsistent with the place and relationship which we have with God.

If we are not practically holy we cannot enjoy what God is for His people, nor shall we answer to His pleasure. The two things go together: “I will be to him God, and he shall be to me son”. If we have God as our inheritance and portion, it is in view of His having His portion in us. But if we feed on what is unclean we cannot enjoy God, for He is holy; neither can He have pleasure in us.

Our discrimination as to clean and unclean is not to be according to human standards, but according to God’s holiness. This is a very high standard, but the children of God would not wish it to be lowered a hair’s breadth. They would like to be taught to discriminate between clean and unclean, and to refuse everything that does not suit the holiness of God. A worldly standard of clean and unclean might have done for Egypt, but the fact that we have been brought out of Egypt, and are now set in relation to God’s sanctuary, brings in a divinely elevated standard of practical holiness.

The priests were to “put difference between the holy and the unholy, and between unclean and clean”, and they were to teach the children of Israel (chapter 10: 10, 11). We have to hallow ourselves in the light of the instruction of this chapter. It applies to every day of the week, and to every hour of the day, because there are ten thousand things around us here — and in our own flesh — which are unclean, and we have to see that we do not assimilate them, or come into moral contact with them.

Eating would typify the inward appropriation of certain features into our moral being. It would specially apply to what we read or give place to in our minds and thoughts. The world’s literature contains much that is unclean; if we assimilate it, and take character from it, we cannot be hallowed for God.

Eating is more serious than *touching* because the inward constitution is built up by what we feed on. But *touching* renders unclean, and Paul applies this very scripture when he says, "Wherefore come out from the midst of them, and be separated, saith the Lord, and *touch not what is unclean*, and I will receive you; and I will be to you for a Father, and ye shall be to me for sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Corinthians 6: 17, 18).

This chapter is a divine guide-book as to what is clean and unclean. The character of walk is the first test of a clean creature, but it must be accompanied by inward rumination. "Whatever hath cloven hoofs, and feet quite split open, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts — that shall ye eat" (verse 3). The cloven hoof indicates separation from the world and its principles; it speaks of a pious walk. We read of "the truth which is according to piety" (Titus 1: 1); piety becomes a practical test for anything which may be presented to us as the truth. We are entitled to ask, Will it give God a greater place in relation to the practical life and walk of His people? If not, it may be doubted whether it is the truth at all.

But then a separate walk must be accompanied by inward occupation of heart and mind with what is of God. This is chewing the cud. Jeremiah said, "I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor exulted: I sat alone because of thy hand"; this would answer to the cloven hoof. But the preceding verse says, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and thy words were unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart" (Jeremiah 15: 16, 17). This would be chewing the cud. Paul says to Timothy, "*Think* of what I say, for the Lord will give thee understanding in all things", and he speaks in the same chapter of withdrawing from iniquity, and of separating from vessels to dishonour (2 Timothy 2:7; 2 Timothy 2:19,21). This gives us the same thing in principle.

Meditation is most important. "Mary kept all these things in her mind, pondering them in her heart" (Luke 2: 19). We do not get spiritual gain so much by hearing and reading as by meditation. Many read their daily chapter, but get little from it because they do not meditate. But then, on the other hand, some are like the camel that "cheweth the cud, but hath not cloven hoofs". He represents one occupied with truth, but not exercised to walk according to it. It is possible to take up divine things in a mental way — to be occupied with doctrines and points, without the practical life being affected in the way of separation. Such are unclean.

Then the swine has the right kind of walk — "for it hath cloven hoofs, and feet quite split open" — but there is no inward assimilation of the mind or grace of God; "it cheweth not the cud". That is like the Pharisee, who is punctilious as to his outward walk, but has not a thought in common with God. The Lord

described such as making clean the outside of the cup and the dish while within they are full of rapine and intemperance; and, again, as being "like whited sepulchres, which appear beautiful outwardly, but within are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness" (Matthew 23: 25 - 33).

God would have His people habituated to the distinguishing of good and evil. "Full-grown men, who, on account of habit, have their senses exercised for distinguishing both good and evil" (Hebrews 5: 14). God has given us the perfect exemplification of all that is clean in the life of Jesus, and that is what we are to take character from. It is a daily, hourly, constant exercise.

The first section (verses 1 - 8) of the chapter refers to "all the beasts which are on the earth". On the earth a careful walk is needed, a walk which is the result of exercise and deliberation and of considering how things stand in relation to God. But it may be noted that the unclean beasts on the earth are not said to be "an abomination", while those in the waters, and the fowls and the creeping things, are. We might learn from this that there are certain things which we are not to take character from, nor even to touch, that have not quite the character before God of "abomination". There may be that which is merely natural, which is not the result of consideration in the fear of God, and which does not carry the mark of piety in the walk, which could hardly be looked upon as an abomination. Still it is unclean because it is not the outcome of exercise toward God. We are not to take character from it. In that which is an "abomination" I think elements of positive and active evil will be found. The refusal of it has to be more pronounced and definite.

The next section (verses 9 - 12) refers to "all that are in the waters". "The waters" represent the world as an element closely surrounding, through which we have to pass. The clean creatures there have "fins and scales". "Fins" would represent the ability to take a definite course without being at the mercy of the currents and tides which are ever moving this way and that in a world of lawlessness. The blessed Lord passed through all the influences here without being in the smallest degree deflected from His course. "I do always the things that are pleasing to him" (John 8: 29). "I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love" (John 15: 10). Following Christ gives definiteness to the course, and so does the leading of the Spirit. Those who walk by the Spirit will not be carried by the currents of lawlessness which are all around us. Lot going down to Sodom is an illustration of what it is to be without "fins". He had "scales" which kept out the corruption of Sodom, for he had a "righteous soul", and he is called "righteous Lot", but he suffered greatly from the lack of "fins". There was nothing definitely for God in his course, though he was a true believer.

"Scales" keep out the surrounding influences. The word is used of Goliath's coat of mail (1 Samuel 17: 5). They suggest the protective character of the divine nature in the saints. Peter speaks of the saints becoming "partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1: 4). The Lord could say, "The ruler of the world comes, and in me he has nothing" (John 14: 30). There was nothing there which the enemy could touch at all. But then John says also, "He that has been begotten of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him" (1 John 5: 18). One can understand the Lord saying, "I am not of the world". There was nothing in Him in common with the world. All that is in the world is "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2: 16), but in Him there was divine love spending itself for others, divine light shedding forth its holy beams to illuminate the hearts of men, and divine lowliness rebuking the pride of life in man. But how wonderful that He should say of His saints, "They are not of the world, as I am not of the world"! All that which separated Him so completely from the world is true also in the divine nature of which His saints are partakers.

Our stature in the divine nature is measured by our knowledge of God. "In the desert God will teach thee, What the God that thou hast found". He has brought us out of Egypt, the place of human resource, that we might learn Him, and have Him as our Resource, and as we do so we are formed in the divine nature. It is through the knowledge of God that "the greatest and precious promises" are given to us. We might say that God Himself becomes the great Promise — the Pledge of every good — and it is through the appropriation of all that God is in this way that we "become partakers of the divine nature". (See 2 Peter 1: 3, 4.) We become well furnished with "scales" to keep out "the corruption that is in the world through lust". Whatever is of the world morally is not only unclean, but it is "an abomination".

No clean fowls are mentioned either here or in Deuteronomy 14. The latter Scripture speaks of "all clean birds" and "all clean fowls", but they are not specified. The chief intent seems to be to warn against the unclean and the abominable. It would appear that the unclean fowls represent spiritual influences of evil. The Lord spoke of the fowls as catching away the good seed, and as roosting in the branches of the mustard tree (Matthew 13). Some of these birds are high-fliers, but they are nearly all destructive and birds of prey. They represent higher critics, religious infidels, teachers of every kind of false doctrine. People who deny the fall of man, and talk about the universal Fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man, who question in various ways the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, who set aside the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the atoning value of His sufferings and death, who

say that the punishment of the lost will not be eternal, and so on. Some of them pass as being very fine birds, but they are destructive; they are soul-destroyers.

The world is full of destructive spiritual influences, and all such influences are to be "an abomination" to us. A christian spoke to me of a religious teacher who denied the Deity of Christ as "a very good man". I asked him if he could call a man "good" who robbed him of his Saviour? Such men are evil-doers, whatever may be their pretensions (see 2 John 10, 11), and their teachings are to be held in abomination. One would make a difference between those who are misled and those who are active agents of evil. If one has been deceived by evil teaching it would be right to feel compassion for him, and seek his deliverance from the snare of the devil. But if people do not judge these evil influences, and keep wholly apart from them, they fall under their power. No false charity or mistaken kindness should lead us to regard evil teaching as other than abominable.

Then winged crawling things are in general an abomination. But if they have "legs above their feet with which to leap upon the earth" they may be eaten. These represent those who are of a lowly order, but who have power to "leap". They may appear pretty much like other crawling things, but when you look at them particularly you see something quite different. They have a God-given power to leave crawling and to leap. It suggests how God has given to those who would naturally be crawlers a power to leap. It speaks of an energy of life by which the soul can rise superior to the earth, and to all that would naturally hold it here. The impotent man in Acts 3 got the ability by divine power to leap up, and to walk and leap and praise God. He appeared in an entirely new character in the power of God's salvation. That is a great indication of moral cleanness; we may safely take character from that kind of thing. "These shall ye eat".

Then "whatever goeth on its paws, among all manner of beasts that go upon all four, those are unclean unto you" (verse 27). They are marked by a soft tread, but a destructive purpose. "Such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And it is not wonderful, for Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. It is no great thing, therefore, if his ministers also transform themselves as ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Corinthians 11: 13 - 15). Jude speaks of men who "crept in unawares"; they came in with a sly, soft tread, but with an evil intent.

There is much about crawling things in this chapter, and no doubt there are many things that answer to that description morally. Then it speaks of

“whatever goeth on the belly” (verse 42). Those whose God is their belly and who mind earthly things (Philippians 3) are crawling things. The Apostle warns us with tears not to take character from such, but to be imitators of him, and of those who have their commonwealth in the heavens.

Moles and field-mice do great harm to growing crops. They suggest influences that would check the prosperity of the people of God viewed as His husbandry under divine tillage. There are many things which check the prosperity and growth of the saints. Moles work underground and disturb the soil about the roots, and the field-mice nibble at the very vitals of tender plants. We all remember the warning about the foxes — *little* foxes — which spoil the grapes! But moles and mice are equally dangerous, and more difficult to catch, for they work underground. If there is not spiritual prosperity and vigour it is well to look for the moles and mice!

Then the lizard in all his different kinds is unclean. The lizard is not very destructive, so far as I know, but the different characteristics mentioned would lead one to think of various ways in which men delight to call attention to themselves. “The groaning lizard” might represent one who is morbidly occupied with his own badness, or his trials, or who reveals his self-importance by complaining of how badly other people treat him. “The great red lizard” would give the idea of a person given to self-display. “The climbing lizard” would suggest the desire to get into an elevated position — loving “the chief place in feasts, and the first seats in the synagogues, and salutations in the market-places, and to be called of men. Rabbi, Rabbi”. “The chameleon” changes its colour, like the man who is one thing with the brethren, and quite another when he is with worldly people.

These different unclean creatures set forth moral features which once characterized us all. It might well be said, “Such were some of you”. But in the great sheet which Peter saw, “in which were all the quadrupeds and creeping things of the earth, and the fowls of the heaven”, they were all seen as cleansed by God. Divine cleansing having come in, and hearts being purified by faith, God’s people no longer take character from what is unclean. We have to see to it that as a holy people we exercise watchfulness to keep ourselves apart from the moral features set forth in these unclean creatures.

To touch the carcasses of these things renders one “unclean until the even”. There is a beautiful touch of grace about that, for it seems to suggest that every such defilement will be taken up and cleansed from the heart and conscience the same day that it is contracted. There is the same principle in “Let not the sun set upon your wrath” (Ephesians 4: 26). You are not to carry an angry feeling over to another day. Our individual path is made up of days,

and God would have every question of anger or defilement settled before "even". How often we let defilement cling to us for days, weeks, months, perhaps sometimes years! But God's way is to have the moral stain removed at "the even" of the day in which it was contracted. It is well that there should be a self-review in holy exercise at the close of each day, and a judging of every touch of what is unclean — that is, every contact with what is of the flesh. In judging it with God there is moral cleansing from it. Each day's accounts are to be settled at "even", not carried over to another day. If things have been had out with God you can lay your head on your pillow without guile. Get under the fig-tree and lay all bare before God, so that there is nothing in reserve, and the Lord can then say of you, "Behold one truly an Israelite, in whom there is no guile" (John 1: 47). Then there are sometimes differences between brothers and sisters which leave a stain of uncleanness on the spirit. Would it not be good to settle them before "even"? The longer things are allowed to run on the more difficult it is to face them.

There is another side to this. If one has touched what is unclean the evil effect cannot be thrown off at once. It abides "until the even". It leaves its mark for the whole of that day. It would have been a serious thing for the unclean Israelite to eat a peace-offering that day as if nothing had happened (chapter 7: 20, 21). This serves to emphasize the necessity for jealous care as to touching what is unclean. I have no doubt that a great deal of time is lost spiritually through unwatchfulness as to this. That is, believers lose much happiness with God which they might otherwise enjoy.

"All vessels of wood ... every vessel wherewith work is done" (verse 32) is defiled by an unclean creature falling on it, and has to be "put into water, and be unclean until the even; then shall it be clean".

I understand such vessels to represent believers as vessels of service. If that which is unclean gets place with such, they have to come under the exercising power of the word which brings the death of Christ to bear upon them, and the result of this is that at even they are clean. But "every earthen vessel into which any of them falleth — whatever is in it shall be unclean and ye shall break it" (verse 33). The "earthen vessel" represents what we are naturally. Contaminating influences find place with us because of what we are naturally, and all that in our nature which leaves us open to these defilements has to be corrected by discipline, which is really the breaking of the earthen vessel. The result of the breaking of the earthen vessel is that the "vessel wherewith work is done" becomes more holy and serviceable. The believer as a vessel of service is helped by the discipline which breaks the earthen vessel. The "vessel to honour, sanctified, serviceable to the Master, prepared for every good work"

(2 Timothy 2: 21) is one who has kept himself in holy separateness from all that is dishonouring and defiling.

The provision of verse 36 is very sweet. "A spring or a well, a quantity of water, shall be clean". The only way to keep free from defilement in a world like this is to be in the energy of the Spirit. "A spring" suggests the energy of the Spirit in the individual giving direction to the exercises and affections of the soul. "The water which I shall give him shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life" (John 4: 14). "A well" is a source of supply from which saints can draw; it would speak of the ministry of Christ in the power of the Spirit. While "a quantity of water" would be realized in the assembly, where the Spirit can distribute gifts, and bring things out in a fulness that goes beyond what is individual.

The secret of immunity from defilement lies in the presence and living activities of the Spirit of God. There is a vital and divine power in the Spirit which enables saints to repel and throw off every defiling influence. "They shall take up serpents; and if they should drink any deadly thing it shall not injure them". Paul shook off the viper that fastened on his hand, and felt no harm. This supposes such an energy of life by the Spirit that unclean things cannot affect us or leave any trace of their influence. "If, by the Spirit, ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Romans 8: 13). "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall no way fulfil flesh's lust" (Galatians 5: 16).

LEVITICUS 12

Leviticus 12

This chapter conveys the thought of a more prolonged exercise than anything that has gone before in the book. Exercise connected with the sin-offering and the trespass-offering was gone through on the day when the sin or trespass came on the conscience of the offender. The uncleanness occasioned by touching what was defiling terminated at "even". But here there are seven or fourteen days of uncleanness, and a prolonged period of cleansing afterwards. This indicates that we have before us here a very deep and grave lesson.

In the previous chapter we have seen a variety of unclean animals from which character was not to be taken, and which were not to be touched if the children of Israel were to be a holy people for God. But now the lesson is brought home that the greatest uncleanness came by the birth of a human child after the flesh. Every increase of the people was to be marked by this prolonged exercise. The uncleanness of the *mother* is emphasized; the lesson of the chapter is that the *source* is unclean. This goes to the very root of things. "Who can bring a clean man out of the unclean? Not one!" (Job 14: 4). And Bildad asks, "How should he be clean that is born of a woman?" (Job 25: 4). God would have us to recognize the moral character which attaches to us as born into this world. Before an act is done, or a word spoken, or a thought conceived in the mind, there is that brought into the world which is marked by sin. "Behold, in iniquity was I brought forth, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51: 5).

Every mother in Israel had to take up the exercise of this. God was teaching His people, and is teaching us, that that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and the best bit of the flesh is unclean. There is no increase for the Israel of God apart from the recognition of this. No lesson is more needed today, even by those who profess to be the people of God. For it is widely held that man only needs suitable environment, education, and good moral influences brought to bear upon him, and he will be all right! But if the source is unclean, and that which is born of the flesh is flesh, how is that to be remedied?

Nothing is brought forth for God in this world apart from taking up this exercise. The double period for a female child is doubtless a reminder that "the woman, having been deceived, was in transgression" (1 Timothy 2: 14), but it may also suggest that when Christ is not distinctly in view, nor His death in its circumcision aspect, the exercises connected with learning the true character of the flesh are more prolonged. But in either case the exercise has to be gone through in its completeness. There is no cutting it short.

What is brought out in this chapter is the uncleanness of the mother, not of the child. That every child born in the natural course would be unclean is obvious; but I believe that the male child here has a typical reference to Christ. This chapter is directly linked by the Spirit of God with the incidents recorded in Luke 2 — incidents which are indelibly engraved on the affections of the saints. And there can be no doubt that circumcision on the eighth day is a figure of the death of Christ in which the flesh has been cut off under the eye of God. It is because everything connected with the order of man after the flesh is unclean that it has had to be cut off in the death of Christ. "The circumcision of the Christ" (Colossians 2: 11) is His death.

The immaculate conception of the virgin is disproved by the fact that she fulfilled the days of purifying, and brought a sin-offering according to this chapter. But of her Son it was said by the angel Gabriel, "*The holy thing* also which shall be born shall be called Son of God" (Luke 1: 35). Of Him alone it could be truly and fully said, that He was "holy to the Lord". The Child was begotten in her of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1: 18, 20), and the body in which He came was prepared of God (Hebrews 10: 5), wholly apart from any taint of sin. He was "the holy one of God" (John 6: 69). Three things are said of Him in words taught by the Holy Spirit: "Who did no sin" (1 Peter 2: 22), "Him who knew not sin" (2 Corinthians 5: 21), "In him sin is not"

(1 John 3: 5). I have no doubt that it is because the sinless humanity of the Lord Jesus was in the view of the Spirit of God that the uncleanness of the mother is spoken of in Leviticus 12 and not the uncleanness of the child. It is "she shall be unclean ... and the priest shall make atonement for her; and she shall be clean".

This chapter is, in type, Israel having to learn her own uncleanness, even though in the wisdom of God's ways and according to His promise, she gave birth to Christ, the sinless One. And if Israel is unclean humanity is unclean. It was the coming in of Christ that made manifest all the uncleanness that was there. It raised the whole question of Israel's state and brought it to light, and she was manifested to be unclean — unfit to touch holy things, or to come into the sanctuary. The coming here of Christ made manifest as nothing had done before that His death was a necessity. "He was in the world, and the world had its being through him, and the world knew him not. He came to his own, and his own received him not" (John 1: 10, 11). There could be no greater evidence than this of the uncleanness of man: the world did not know Him, and Israel — with the light of promises, law, and covenants — did not receive Him! The full testimony of divine goodness, relieving men of every need and pressure, had its answer at Calvary! God revealing Himself in the

perfection of grace and truth brought out all the deep-rooted enmity of the human heart. There is no room for divine love or holiness in the unclean heart of man.

“And on the eighth day shall the flesh of his foreskin be circumcised”. This is a figure of the death of Christ as that in which the flesh is absolutely cut off for God. (See “An Outline of Genesis”, chapter 17.) “The eighth day” coming in after the “seven days” of uncleanness suggests how God has taken account of the uncleanness of the flesh, and has provided for “the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of the Christ” (Colossians 2: 11.). The eighth day stands in relation to the preceding seven, but it has in view the bringing in for God of that which is wholly apart from the uncleanness of the flesh.

The death of the sinless Son of God made resurrection a necessity “inasmuch as it was not possible that he should be held by its power”. He could not be left in death. The flesh, with all its uncleanness, has been cut off in His death, but the very fact that it was done in *His* death has rendered resurrection inevitable. Man — in the Person of Jesus — lives apart from all the uncleanness of the flesh, which was judged and cut off vicariously in His death, and He is now for ever beyond death. The circumcision of His death — necessary on account of what flesh was — necessitates resurrection because of what He was. If we think of the uncleanness of the flesh being cut off in His death, through grace, we are reminded at the same moment of the unsullied purity in which He lives to God as the Risen One. The eighth day covers both in type: it gives us the circumcision aspect of the death of Christ, but it teaches us also that the death of *Christ* involves resurrection. It involves that man shall be with God eternally apart from uncleanness, apart from sin and death, in suitability to all that God is, and that for His pleasure.

The “seven days” give us the uncleanness of humanity as demonstrated by the coming in of Christ. The “eighth” day gives us, in type, the cutting off of unclean flesh in the death of Christ, and an entirely new place for man in the eternal purity of resurrection. It speaks of something for God, as we see in type in Exodus 22: 30. “Seven days shall it be with its dam: on the eighth day thou shalt give it me”. The eighth day is the day of completed cleansing for the leper (Leviticus 14), for the one who has a flux (Leviticus 15), and for the defiled Nazarite (Numbers 6). Attention has often been called to the fact that the numerical value of the letters of the Name JESUS is 888. It is the intensification of all that the number eight stands for in Scripture. It is in relation to the previous seven in two senses. Seven may be viewed — as in the woman’s seven days of uncleanness — as the perfect disclosure of the fallen state of humanity. This has been met and cut off in the death of Jesus

for the glory of God, so that men may be blessed according to the holy worth of Jesus — Jehovah the Saviour. Or the seven days may be viewed as the complete manifestation of the personal perfection of Jesus in all His moral glory and beauty as the Holy One of God brought out in life and in death. There could be but one answer to that — resurrection. Man in the Person of Jesus is now for ever apart from sin, and beyond death, for God's eternal satisfaction and delight, and the blessing of God for men is according to what He is. Everything for God is thus placed on the footing of what Christ is, and nothing depends on what man is according to the flesh.

But though God has reached this absolutely in all its completeness and value so that nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it, it is a very deep and serious lesson for man to learn. Hence the thirty-three or sixty-six days come in — a prolonged exercise on the human side. It is for us, of course, not measured by days or weeks but by soul exercise. The prolonged period is spoken of here as "the days of her cleansing"; it is thus morally contrasted with the days of uncleanness.

We learn the uncleanness of the flesh by its entire lack of appreciation of Christ, by its utter refusal of Him. I find that my flesh does not want Christ; it prefers every vanity of this world to Christ; and if brought face to face with Him so as to be tested fully it hates Him. This is a very searching and humbling lesson. Then we learn that in His death unclean flesh was cut off in holy judgment; He bore its just condemnation. Thus in the light of Christ and of His death one learns to judge oneself. We see that what we are by nature and according to flesh is morally corrupt; it is to be judged, refused, and hated, not gratified. The soul in this exercise is learning to be morally separate from what is of the flesh; it is going through the days of cleansing.

The latter part of Romans 7 shows a process of self-discovery *under law*, but self-discovery in presence of *Christ* is an even deeper lesson; it is an intensified exercise. But it is accompanied by a precious and subduing sense of grace, for the One in whose presence all my uncleanness is exposed is my Saviour; He has died for me, and in Him God's thoughts of infinite grace toward me are set forth. If *I* am all wrong, *He* is all that is precious and acceptable to God, and all that He is, is for me.

There is a difference between being crucified with Christ and being circumcised in Him. Being crucified with Him refers to the place which we take up in the world — a place of reproach and contempt. But circumcision is what the world cannot take account of at all; it is the death of Christ as known in the heart and spirit of the believer, and taken account of by God. The believer

who has come to it has no confidence in the flesh; he is morally clear of it in his spirit with God.

If souls are not in the light of Christ, and of what has been effected in His death, their exercises in relation to self-discovery will be prolonged and intensely painful. This is intimated, perhaps, in the much longer period of cleansing for a female child. There is something wrought of God subjectively — the female would typify this — but Christ is not clearly and fully in the soul's view. This probably sets forth typically the exercises of the remnant of Israel when God begins to work in them. They will fear God and love His law, and follow after righteousness, without having — at any rate in the early stages of their exercise — any clear light as to Christ, or as to what is connected with the eighth day. Their deep and prolonged exercise appears in many of the Psalms and in the Prophets — a sense of sin and an earnest looking to God for His salvation, but no clear light, as yet, with regard to Christ. The latter-day exercises of the remnant will be bitter and prolonged, but they will learn thereby that "all flesh is grass". They will be humbled by the consideration of their individual and national history — the law broken, the promises despised, the idolatry, the rejection of their Messiah, the refusal of Him who spoke from heaven. But the moment will come when they will see that all this, which is the evidence of their state in flesh, has been dealt with and judged in the death of their Messiah. He has made it all His own in wondrous grace that they might be relieved of it, and be able to bless themselves in Him (Psalm 72: 17). When their exercises have reached a suitable point the light of Christ and of His death will break in upon their souls through the prophetic word, and they will learn to take their place with God on the ground of what He is, and of His death. The days of their cleansing will then be fulfilled. They will learn to part company with all that they are in their natural uncleanness, and to be with God on the ground of the Lamb of the burnt-offering, and the Turtle-dove of the sin-offering.

Something analogous to this is often found in souls today. They have exercises which are the fruit of mercy and of divine working in them. They have desires God-ward, and they learn painfully their uncleanness bit by bit, first at one point and then at another, and go on for years without getting clear. Such prolonged exercises are very common under defective teaching, and where souls have not the ministry of Christ, or, at any rate, not what might be called an "eighth day" ministry. They are not cleansed from their uncleanness, though learning it, and learning to abhor themselves. They are not in liberty with God, and are not really in the truth and blessing of Christ.

It is important to see that "the fulness of the time" has come (Galatians 4: 4). It is really the time of the Male Child and the "eighth day". Simeon received the holy Child into his arms and blessed God (Luke 2: 28). He realized the exercise the Child's mother would have to go through, and how the Child would be "for a sign spoken against", and that "even a sword shall go through thine own soul; so that the thoughts may be revealed from many hearts". All this was connected with the laying bare of man's uncleanness. But to Simeon He was God's salvation, "prepared before the face of all peoples; a light for revelation of the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel". Everything was there in Him for God's pleasure and man's blessing. We have individually to learn this. None of us can touch holy things or come into the sanctuary until we have learned it.

The fulfilment of the period of cleansing is marked by bringing "a yearling lamb for a burnt-offering, and a young pigeon or a turtle-dove for a sin-offering". The soul takes its place consciously with God apart from the uncleanness of the flesh, on the ground of Christ, and of His death in burnt-offering and sin-offering character. It is worth while to go through much exercise to reach that — to see in any measure the marvellous triumph that has been effected by God's salvation through grace. We have to learn the necessity for severance from all that we were morally as of natural generation, but God's salvation has transferred us from the uncleanness of nature to the perfection and blessedness of Christ, and has given us capacity, by the renewing of the Holy Spirit, to touch holy things and to enter the sanctuary. We can be with God in holy freedom, apart from the uncleanness of nature. Is it not a "great salvation"? Let us take heed that we do not neglect it, for the people of God may neglect the great salvation as well as the openly ungodly.

If we truly take up the exercise of Leviticus 12 we shall be preserved from leprosy as seen in chapters 13, 14. A man judging himself in the light of Christ would never become a leper. Leprosy is constitutional, and comes of what is unclean; but if the unclean source is judged, and that judgment is spiritually maintained, there will be no leprosy. If the lesson of chapter 12 is not learned with God there may be an outbreak of the will of the flesh which exposes what the fallen nature really is, and it may for a time become characteristic of one of the people of God.

The answer to every exercise is Christ. Israel will find it to be so, and we have to learn it also. The more distinctly our souls are in the light of Christ the more easily and quickly we learn our lessons. Anything brought forth which is true increase in the Israel of God will be accompanied by such exercises as are indicated here.

LEVITICUS 13

Leviticus 13

We have something here much more serious than the sin of inadvertence, or the trespass, of chapters 4 and 5. It is not simply that there is sin in the flesh, and no good there, and that the mind of the flesh is enmity against God. That is true of the flesh in each one of us, and it has to be judged in secret with God. But leprosy is the breaking out of the lawlessness of the flesh in acts or words so as to call for the priestly discernment and pronounced judgment of the saints. It renders one unfit to occupy one's tent, or to partake in the privileges of the congregation of God.

The fact that such a condition is set before us in type with so much detailed instruction shows that it is likely to be met with amongst the people of God. It also shows that He would have His priests skilled in ability to discern it, faithful in dealing with it, and also qualified to render all the service needed for cleansing when His mercy has brought in healing. One cannot doubt that the instruction of these two long chapters has an important present application.

All unrighteousness is sin, but it is not always leprosy. Leprosy is a sore betraying the existence of a deep-seated constitutional taint, which becomes for the time characteristic of the person affected. It represents the coming into evidence in a pronounced way of the will of the flesh, so that for the time being the individual is characterized by it. This is a terrible thing, for the will of the flesh is unclean and abhorrent to God. It is like the presumptuous sin of Psalm 19: 13, which David prayed to be kept from. One really characterized by it is unsuitable for the companionship of God's people. "He shall dwell apart; outside the camp shall his dwelling be" (verse 46).

Miriam spoke against Moses; Gehazi in his covetousness spoiled the witness of free grace to the Gentile; and Uzziah presumed to exercise priesthood without divine title. All three were smitten with leprosy, and are examples of moral conditions which in the government of God result in leprosy. This shows how important it is to judge a corrupt and wilful state of soul, for if it is not judged in secret it will, sooner or later, come into evidence in the body by word or deed.

These chapters (13, 14) are wonderful instruction in grace, for if they emphasize the seriousness of leprosy they also intimate very clearly the possibility of the leper being healed and cleansed. The healing of a leper is entirely of God; it is not the priest's work to *heal* him, though when he is healed the priest has a good deal to do with his *cleansing*. When there is

pronounced activity of the will of the flesh God alone can bring a man to judge it. When self-judgment comes in the leper is healed. He must be healed before anything can be done for his cleansing. If the priest went outside the camp and looked at the leper and found him healed he knew that the power of God had been in operation. When a man in whom will has been active says, as Isaiah did, "Woe unto me! for I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts", the leprosy is healed. In that chapter (Isaiah 6) we see how by the touch of the glowing coal from the altar his iniquity was taken away, and his sin expiated. His lips were cleansed so that he spoke of the glory of Christ. "These things said Esaias because he saw his glory and spoke of him". See Isaiah 6: 1 - 7; John 12: 41. How wonderful the grace of it! The deeper the lesson of self-knowledge and self-judgment the more profound the sense of grace. We have to do with the God of all grace.

There may be sores which look like leprosy, but which are not really leprosy, and hence priestly discernment and care become most important. In doubtful cases nothing is to be done in a hurry. There are certain symptoms which have to be carefully noted. The hair in the sore turned white is a serious indication. It suggests definite signs of spiritual decline and decay. The neglect of the private reading of the Scriptures and of prayer cannot be seen by others, but when persons lose their interest in the meetings and in the people of God, and begin fault-finding and taking up worldly interests and associations, these are obvious and suspicious signs. Viewed along with other things they serve to guide the priest in his judgment. Then "the sore looketh deeper than the skin of his flesh". This settles the question; "it is the sore of leprosy". It is not merely an infirmity of manner, or a manifestation of irritability, but a settled and determined working of the will of the flesh. The man's mind and spirit are really characterized by what is displeasing to God; the "sore" is "deeper than the skin". Such a one can only be pronounced "unclean". He is, for the time being, unfit to enjoy the privilege of the sanctuary, or of the fellowship to which saints are called.

There is a more doubtful case in verses 4 - 6, and it requires patience for the discernment of its true character. The man with a "sore" has to be shut up for seven days, and possibly another seven, before it can be determined whether it is leprosy or not. In such a case the man is not definitely pronounced "unclean", but he is "shut up". There is enough in his case to cause considerable exercise and waiting upon God, and the restriction of his liberty, until the true nature of what is working can be determined. The shutting up is really in the patience of grace; it is because the priest has noted certain favourable indications (verse 4), and he is hopeful that no necessity may arise

to pronounce the man unclean. But the case is sufficiently grave to demand care, and the man cannot be regarded as free from question, or as one who can move in and out freely as having the confidence of his brethren.

If at the end of the first seven days "the sore remaineth as it was, the sore hath not spread in the skin", it is another favourable indication, and gives further hope that it is not a case of leprosy. And he is shut up "seven days a second time". If things remain as they are and do not increase, it is, so far, favourable.

When any evil spreads it is a bad sign; it shows that there is an active energy about it. A root of bitterness springing up may trouble the saints, and many be defiled by it. But if *will* is not persistently active — if it is not really leprosy — under the normal working of grace sores "become pale"; they die down, and the virulence disappears. A bad feeling between saints, or on the part of one towards others, is a "sore", but there is always a secret and persistent working of grace which tends to heal such things. All ministry, and mutual spiritual activities amongst saints, and pastoral care, tend to healing.

You may feel very angry with a brother or sister, but as the days pass grace begins to assert its power in your soul, and the result is that you feel inclined to make a little more allowance than you did at first. Then it occurs to you that perhaps you were not so wise and gracious yourself as you might have been. Now if these exercises are being produced in your soul under the influence of grace you may be assured that the same process is going on in your brother or sister. The "sore" is becoming "pale"! It is always so with the people of God if they judge the activity of their own wills. And as this is seen it is the happy indication that the "sore" is not leprosy.

Under grace there is always a working towards healing. So that if a sore spreads and becomes more virulent it is very serious. It indicates that, for the time, the will of the flesh is more in evidence than the power of divine grace in the soul. If sores do not become "pale", and if they spread, it indicates some positive working of the will of the flesh.

There may be much that is trying in a brother or a sister, but we must not be in a hurry to pronounce it leprosy. Perhaps if we got spiritually near to them we should find that those things were more trying to them than they are to us. The conscience is sensitive as to them, and the heart mourns them. In such a case there may be much the soul has to be humbled about, but there is not leprosy. The priest knows how to distinguish between infirmities of manner and habits of speech which may be a trial, but which are not "deeper than the skin", and those manifestations which indicate a positive and active working of the will.

In verses 9 - 11 we have a more definite case. "Behold, there is a white rising in the skin, and it hath turned the hair white, and a trace of raw flesh is in the rising: it is an old leprosy in the skin of his flesh". In this case things are so manifest that there is no need for delay in pronouncing upon it. There is clear evidence. "It is an old leprosy". There has been something there unjudged, perhaps for years, but it has now come to light. If things are gone on with in secret — perhaps allowed to work in the mind unjudged — there comes a time when, in the governmental ways of God, they are exposed. There is often a long secret history behind an open outbreak of leprosy.

What is seen in verses 12, 13, is in marked contrast to "an old leprosy" that has been long working in secret. Here the leprosy covers "all the skin of him that hath the sore, from his head even to his foot, wherever the eyes of the priest look". In this case all is out. It speaks of full confession. The priest pronounces him clean, and it is emphatically added, "he is clean". There is no guile in such a man; truth is in his inward parts. There is not the slightest pretension to be other than what he is; not a single spot "wherever the eyes of the priest look" where there is any hypocrisy or dissimulation. He is leprous, but he is, in type, upright with God and with his brethren about it. "He is clean".

But with such a one there may be again the appearance of "raw flesh", and on the day when this appears "he shall be unclean". There is the sad possibility, even after an upright and open acknowledgment of what has worked in one's flesh, that there may be again an activity of that flesh. How humbling is the thought of this! What watchfulness and prayerfulness does it necessitate! We need to be at all times in absolute dependence upon God, "kept guarded by the power of God through faith" (1 Peter 1: 5). To those of us who have known by experience how "raw flesh" can come into evidence, perhaps again and again, it is a comfort to see that this paragraph does not end without a suggestion of the "raw flesh" changing again and becoming white, so that the man can come to the priest, and be once more pronounced clean because "he is clean". How wondrous is the grace and mercy of God that can bring about restoration even in such a case as is typified here!

Then "a boil" (verses 18 - 23) or "a burning inflammation" (verses 24 - 28) are suspicious signs, and are very apt to be starting points of leprosy. I think these things would refer to outbreaks of natural heat and irritability and bad temper. Probably such things are found with most of us at times, though some may be specially liable to them. There can be no doubt that such things often lead to prolonged ill-feeling. An immense amount of blessing and joy is hindered by

personal feelings coming in amongst the people of God. Such things interfere with the activity of the Spirit,

and are a great restraint upon spiritual freedom when saints come together. We have to be careful that what begins in personal infirmity does not end in a positive and persistent activity of the will of the flesh.

If wrong feelings come in, to speak of them to others is only spreading the sore. It is better to have "seven days" alone with God. That would check the springing up and spreading of roots of bitterness. It is because we lack the grace of God that these things come in; if that grace continually acted on our spirits it would set them aside; they would go like the morning mists before the sun.

It is striking that only in connection with leprosy in the head is the man pronounced "utterly unclean". I think this shows that the will of the flesh taking form in thoughts and teaching is the most serious form of leprosy. It might be said of every teacher of evil doctrine that "his sore is in his head". If a man has wrong thoughts of God or of Christ he is "utterly unclean". There was probably never more head leprosy than there is today — the proud will of the flesh manifesting itself in all kinds of evil thought and teaching. There is much that is not merely the fruit of human infirmity or ignorance but which is Satanic in origin and anti-christian in character, and which has in it all the elements of apostasy.

Holding Christ as Head, and deriving from Him, is the divine preservative from this kind of leprosy. There are no pure and holy thoughts apart from Christ and the Holy Spirit. A saint of 300 years ago had some sense of this when he said

"Profaneness in my head,
Defects and darkness in my breast".

But he could also add:

"Only another Head
I have, another Heart and Breast".

"Christ is my only Head,
"My alone only Heart and Breast.

"My doctrine tuned by Christ, Who is not dead
But lives in me while I do rest". (George Herbert)

To have by His Spirit the intelligence and affections of Christ would preserve us from every form of leprosy.

The leper with garments rent and head uncovered, and with the cry, "Unclean, unclean!" upon his lips, had to "dwell apart; outside the camp shall his dwelling be". He had to realize his condition, and to own it publicly, and to accept the fact that he was unsuitable for companionship with the people of God, or for the enjoyment of their holy privileges. He found himself, like the wicked person at Corinth, removed from amongst the people of God, but not to be forgotten by them. He was still to be the subject of priestly solicitude and care. "His tent" would ever be a reminder that he was of Israel, and in the light of these two chapters there would ever be the desire that he might be healed and cleansed, and brought back to his tent and his privileges.

The closing part of the chapter refers to leprosy in a garment, which would represent something not exactly personal, but closely identified with the person, such as one's occupation or habits or associations. In this case the *man* is not leprous, but his *garment* lies under suspicion and must be "shown unto the priest". Some callings are unclean, and a believer could not abide in them with God. In such a case the whole garment is infected, and must be burned with fire. The *spreading* of the sore is an important indication, as it was in the person, and would prove it to be "a corroding leprosy".

If something which there is reason to suspect to be evil increases, and makes its character more apparent, it must be dealt with unsparingly. The first indication may not be sufficient to decide the matter, but as soon as it is seen to be extending it is known as "a corroding leprosy". If the sore has not spread after seven days the garment is washed and shut up a second seven days. The word, bringing in the moral cleansing power of the death of Christ, is applied to the existing conditions, and space given for the effect to be made manifest. If after the washing the sore has not changed its appearance, this is sufficient to prove it unclean even if the sore has not spread. There has been no effect from the application of the word, and this is serious. It is in this case "a fretting sore"; not so virulent, perhaps, as the "corroding leprosy" of verses 51, 52, but decidedly "unclean", and the garment in which it is must be burned with fire. There are certain habits or associations which give indications that there is something about them which is not of God, and when the word is brought in and applied to them, and no change is produced, it makes apparent that they are unclean.

But if the sore becomes pale after washing it may be possible that the whole garment is not unclean, but only the piece where the sore is, which has to be rent from it. Sometimes it is not the whole of a certain association that is

unclean, but only a part of it, in which case the unclean part only is to be got rid of. But if, after doing this, the sore appears again, it is evident that the whole is infected and must be burned. But if after washing the sore departs, "it shall be washed a second time, and it is clean". There are certain conditions which only need the application of the word of cleansing to bring them into moral suitability: in this case there is no leprosy. But there are other conditions which are in themselves so unclean that there is no remedy but unsparing judgment, and getting rid of all that is connected with them.

The people of God are to cleanse themselves from every pollution of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in His fear. They are to hate the garment spotted by the flesh, and to keep themselves unspotted from the world. If any occupation, or habit, or association is found to hinder one's liberty with God, or the enjoyment of spiritual things, or happy fellowship with one's brethren, or power in service, it is to be suspected that there is some "sore of leprosy" about it, and it should be subjected at once to priestly scrutiny and care. Do not go on with anything that you cannot connect with God. If it cannot be done to His glory it is better to tear it out, or to burn the whole garment.

LEVITICUS 14

Leviticus 14

We may note that chapter 13 is addressed to Moses and Aaron; chapter 14: 1 - 32 to Moses only; then chapter 14: 33 - 53 is to Moses and Aaron. Priestly discernment is called for in the sections where Aaron is addressed, but chapter 14: 1 - 32 is the setting forth of the mind of Jehovah as to the cleansing of the leper;

it is a wondrous unfolding of Jehovah's grace through the mediator.

The leper must be "healed" before the priest can do anything. When *will* is active only God can deal with it. A course of persistent self-will must end disastrously if God does not come in in the sovereignty of His mercy. Paul delivered Hymenaeus and Alexander to Satan that they might be taught by discipline not to blaspheme. In their case we may see an instance of how God can put a check on the action of man's will for the good of His saints without necessarily healing the leper. In another case, "An heretical man after a first and second admonition have done with, knowing that such a one is perverted, and sins, being self-condemned" (Titus 3: 10, 11). Such a man is a leper whose "sore is in his head"; he has to be left with God after being twice admonished. Then there are cases where those who oppose are to be set right in meekness, "if God perhaps may sometime give them repentance to acknowledgment of the truth, and that they may awake up out of the snare of the devil, who are taken by him, for *his* will" (2 Timothy 2: 25, 26). It is sovereign mercy if a man who has pursued a course of self-will wakes up out of it to be for God's will.

The Lord puts the cleansing of the leper entirely on the ground of sovereignty in Luke 4, for He says, "There were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed but Naaman the Syrian". It seems as though the leper in Luke 5 had understood that, for he said, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou art able to cleanse me". He submitted himself to divine sovereignty.

In the case of a self-willed believer the advocacy of Christ might be answered by a discipline which would bring him to submission. Then God would use the attitude of the brethren towards him as a very deep exercise. It is brought home to him that the priest has pronounced him unclean, and that his dwelling is outside the camp. He has to take up all the exercise of this — to rend his garments, and uncover his head, and cry, "Unclean, unclean!" He has

to acknowledge his condition, and to realize that he is unfit to be a companion of God's people.

But all this has healing and cleansing in view. This chapter would encourage us to look for the healing of lepers. Indeed it is very clear evidence that God is with His people when healing comes about; one of His Names is Jehovah-Rophi — Jehovah that healeth thee. It is a serious exercise if the state of God's Israel is such that He cannot manifest His healing power amongst them. The Lord's service in Israel was marked by healing, feeding, and teaching; healing must come first, for an unhealed person cannot enjoy spiritual food or take in divine teaching.

For the cleansing of the leper the priest commands two clean living birds to be taken, and cedar-wood and scarlet and hyssop. The "two clean living birds" as typical of Christ would suggest what He was as coming down from heaven. It was characteristic of Him that He came down from heaven not to do His own will but the will of Him who sent Him (John 6: 38). He was of the things that are above, and the whole principle of His moral being was obedience. God presents to the healed leper, and to every one of us, a new and heavenly kind of Man in Christ. As marked by activity of will the leper has manifested that he was "of those things which are beneath" (see note to John 8: 23 in New Translation), but he is now to learn Christ as "of those things which are above" — the perfect contrast to all that has been active in himself. His self-judgment is to be according to an estimate formed in the light of what was true in Christ.

The "cedar-wood and scarlet and hyssop" would, I think, intimate things which had their anti-type in Christ. If the cedar speaks of "the loftiness of man", as it does in Isaiah 2, and the scarlet of anything that would give him distinction, and the hyssop of his low estate, I think these things may be also suggestive of what Christ was in the days of His flesh. It is said of Him, "His bearing as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars" (Song of Songs 5: 15). Wherever we look at Him — in the home at Nazareth, in the temple at twelve years of age, at the baptismal water of Jordan, in the temptation, with His disciples, with the multitudes, with His adversaries — His bearing had at all times the excellency of the cedar.

Then "scarlet" is a *distinguishing* colour, as we may see in Genesis 38: 28; Joshua 2: 18; 2 Samuel 1: 24. "A cloth of scarlet" over the dishes, cups, bowls and goblets of the drink-offering and the continual bread on the table (Numbers 4: 8) seems to speak of the distinction which God will put upon Israel when they have their administrative place as sustained by Christ for God's pleasure, and they become vessels of drink-offering as gladly devoted to

Him. So the "scarlet" would set forth those features in Christ which in a marked way distinguished Him from all others as having the true glory of Man in contrast with every kind of vain-glory.

Then the "hyssop" would typify the lowliness in which He took a bondman's form, and was ever found amongst His own, and in the world, as the One who served. The lowliness of perfect obedience and subjection to the will of God ever marked Him.

The priest is to command that these things are to be taken for the healed leper. It is not the leper who brings them; they are taken for him along with the two clean living birds. He is to learn in Christ all that is truly excellent and distinctive of man as having honour from God, and the lowliness in which it was all sustained so that He never sought His own glory or pleasure but the glory of God and the good of men. What a contrast is all this to that of which leprosy speaks! What a humbling lesson does it all mean for the healed leper! And yet what a blessed instruction in Christ!

Then one bird is to be killed in an earthen vessel over running (or living) water. This would seem to suggest the death of Christ as that of which the witness is preserved for application to the soul in the power of the Spirit. The living bird, the cedar-wood, the scarlet, and the hyssop are all dipped in the blood of the killed bird, and the one who is to be cleansed is sprinkled seven times by the priest, and pronounced clean. Christ is seen here as the Living One, but as having become dead on account of that state which had characterized the leper. If all that in Him which was so excellent and distinctive, so morally suitable to God, had to go into death it gives a profound sense of the cost at which cleansing has been made possible for the leper. If Christ after the flesh, with all His supreme moral excellence, had to go in death, what does it make of man's greatness or glory, or even of his voluntary humility? It is seen to be vanity, and to be subject to death, but a death into which Christ came in wondrous grace for the glory of God and to make cleansing possible for men. What powerful influence is this to bring to bear on the healed leper in seven-fold sprinkling! Christ has been into death to bring to an end the man after the flesh, with all the activities of his lawless will, so that those who believe on Him might be henceforth characterized by the living activities of the Spirit. Both the living water and the oil in this chapter are typical of the Holy Spirit. "Living water" would suggest inward refreshment which meets the thirst of the soul and puts it on the line of true satisfaction. The "oil" would refer to the Spirit as giving capability to hear and to serve and to walk in spiritual intelligence and power.

Then the living bird let loose into the open field would suggest that Christ is known as having returned from death to heavenly associations. He has died to sin, and has done with it, and He now lives to God. It is good to get an apprehension of Christ as living to God, for if He lives to God it is that we may take account of ourselves as alive to God in Christ Jesus. There is something very attractive to an exercised soul in the thought of living to God; that is, for God's pleasure. There is One blessed Man who does so absolutely, but He lives to God that we also may live to God in Him, no longer on the line of what we are as in the flesh, but in a new order of man — in Christ Jesus.

Up to this point all has been done for the man who is to be cleansed, but now he has to do something for himself. He has to wash his garments, shave all his hair, and bathe in water. In the light of Christ as having died to sin and living to God the healed leper brings his garments — all his outward associations and habits — under a process of moral cleansing. He has to overhaul himself, and to bring everything about him into suitability for the camp. One in whom there has been a leprous working of will is sure to have defiled his garments. Everything about him has been affected by his wilful state, and now that he is healed and self-judged he has to adjust and cleanse everything before he can resume the normal life of a saint as living to God. This is an exercise which can only be gone through with feelings of shame, but there is also an encouraging sense that one's exercises are now on the line of obedience and righteousness, and not on the line of one's own will.

The leper is not, typically, an unconverted man, but one of the people of God who has got into a wilful state. The exercises of such, in view of recovery, are deeper and more humbling than those of a convicted sinner, because the believer has known grace, has valued Christ, and has received the Spirit. And all this adds to the depth of his self-abhorrence when mercy grants him repentance and heals his leprosy.

Such a one has to "shave all his hair, and bathe in water". He feels the necessity for bringing under judgment everything about him that has been the outcome of his unclean state, or identified with it. He must resume his place in the camp as one who has obviously set aside, by the sharp razor of self-judgment, everything that has been affected by, or that has taken character from, his leprous state. He comes back to be wholly on the ground of Christ, and in the Spirit not in the flesh. All that he was naturally had come under the taint of the terrible moral disease which had worked in him, and he is now set to refuse it all, and to be on the line of the spiritual.

"And afterwards shall he come into the camp, and shall abide outside his tent seven days". He is now morally suited to the congregation of God, but he has

a further exercise before he can be really at home as to his affections amongst the saints. Many have known what it is to be clear in conscience without being yet in perfect freedom of heart. This is reached on the eighth day, but not without passing through another exercise on the seventh day which is more searching as to every detail than the former one. He is, now to shave "his head, and his beard, and his eyebrows, even all his hair shall he shave, and he shall wash his garments, and shall bathe his flesh in water, and he is clean".

What a comprehensive and particular process of exercise does this suggest! Every detail of what had stood connected with his leprous state is thoroughly dealt with in unsparing practical separation. It is not merely a general self-judgment, but a sharp and decisive refusal in detail of all that has grown out of that state of uncleanness in which he has been involved. Do not let us pass lightly over this, or think that it can be dispensed with. The exercises typified here are essential to cleansing where there has been a persistent action of self-will.

"The eighth day" completes the cleansing, and all is now "before Jehovah, at the entrance of the tent of meeting". The eighth day, it will be remembered, is in another connection the circumcision day — typically the day when the flesh is seen to be cut off in the death of Christ. Here it is the day when the healed and cleansed leper is restored to the full privilege of an Israelite; it answers to 2 Corinthians 2: 8. He is now to learn Christ and the Spirit in a very blessed way after having learned himself in a very humbling way. He is now to be brought into line with his brethren in their apprehensions and appreciations of Christ. But in relation to all this he is the subject of priestly service. Indeed, the amount of care and service that God makes available for the healed leper is a striking feature of this chapter. As we give more place to the truth of the assembly I am persuaded that priestly service will come more into evidence. There will be more spiritual ability to discern leprosy, but also to do all that is necessary for the cleansing of the healed leper. The leper cannot cleanse himself; he cannot take up his spiritual privileges without coming under priestly service. Sometimes we hear of a man who has been naughty and wilful pronouncing himself to be healed and cleansed, and being quite hurt when his brethren do not at once accept his testimony. I think God would have such a one to recognize that he needs priestly service, and that he is dependent upon the priestly element in his brethren. But this raises a very real exercise as to how far we are competent to render priestly service. It requires the conditions set forth in type in the garments and consecration of the priesthood.

The first thing which the priest presents is the he-lamb for a trespass-offering. The priest and the healed leper are together in the recognition that what has come in needed the death of Christ to make atonement for it. There has been specific violation of some commandment of the Lord. The tendency is to be too general — to admit general failure, but not to own frankly what one has done wrong. Priestly service would help as to this. When we are really self-judged we are prepared to call things by their right names.

It is striking to see that the trespass-offering and the log of oil are presented and waved together. The man is led to see as before God that he has trespassed, and what his trespass meant to Christ who bore it in love, but I think there may be a suggestion here that he is also led to see what it meant to the Holy Spirit who was grieved by it. Indeed "the log of oil" might teach us to recognize that what answers to leprosy in a believer comes about by ignoring the Spirit of God. I should not fulfil the lust of the flesh if I walked in the Spirit, much less should I maintain it in *will*.

But "the log of oil" is more than the reminder of this. It intimates that the healed leper is henceforth to be a spiritual man. What is before God is the ability of Christ to bear the judgment of the trespass, but also that the one who trespassed is now to take character from the presence of the Spirit.

The priest has spiritual intelligence as to all this. And he has exercises in spiritual affections and sensibilities and sympathies also. The trespass-offering is *his*; he has to eat it. He makes the trespass his own. One would desire so to walk with one's brethren that if a brother had been leprous and had been healed he might be able to count upon one doing this for him.

Then the ear, the hand, and the foot of the healed man have to carry the blood of the trespass-offering and the oil. What is first before God has then to leave its mark on the man. The blood claims him for the will of God. If the memorial of the trespass-offering is on his ear, hand and foot, those members can be no longer surrendered to the will of the flesh. Then there is the Spirit to give character to his hearing, action and walk. His members are to be held as dead in regard to his own will, but the Spirit comes in as life to control them for God. He is to be characterized by spiritual hearing, action and walk. It suggests, too, in a blessed way how the Lord went through this scene entirely under the Spirit's control. The priest has a great sense of the place the Spirit has before God; he sprinkles the oil seven times before Jehovah. This indicates how the perfection of divine pleasure is only to be brought about in the power of the Spirit.

"The remainder of the oil that is in the priest's hand he shall put upon the head of him that is to be cleansed". Such is the wonderful grace of God that

the one who had been a leper gets something that he never had before as an ordinary Israelite. He gets an anointing which speaks of spiritual intelligence and dignity such as he had not before. We may see something like this in the Corinthians and Galatians, who had turned away from what was of the Spirit of God, but who got through divine healing and the priestly service of Paul more than they had had before. What a thought it gives us of grace!

Naturally we might feel doubtful whether one who has manifested the will of the flesh in such a way as to be pronounced unclean would ever again be quite what he was before. But this chapter would teach us the immensity of a mercy and grace that can not only heal and cleanse a leper, but can give him more than he had before. It shows that whenever we go through a real exercise with God, however humbling the occasion of it may be, we get spiritual enlargement and enrichment. Some might be inclined to say that this puts a premium on departure and sell-will! Nothing of the kind! It puts a premium on having to do with God! If we went on steadily with God we should learn the same lessons in a deeper and better way,

and our exercises would have more of a priestly character all through. One feels assured that the priest who cleansed the leper learned all that the leper learned, and learned it more deeply because of his greater nearness to God. Paul got for his own soul all that he passed on to the Corinthians and Galatians, but he got it in a priestly way; that is, by spiritual exercise without the experience of having failed in the same way himself.

The sin-offering is more general in character; it comes in here with reference to the man's uncleanness. And there is also the oblation and the burnt-offering. The whole state of man in the flesh, with all his uncleanness, has been judged and removed sacrificially in the death of Christ as the sin-offering. This clears the ground. Then the burnt-offering is the sweet savour of the death of Christ as the basis for the bringing in of everything that is for divine pleasure. And the oblation gives the preciousness of Christ as Man in the power of the Holy Spirit. That is the character of Man which will eventually fill all things for the pleasure of God. The man with oil upon his head can appreciate all this in a spiritual way.

What is priestly always helps in the direction of self-judgment, truer and more enlarged apprehension and appreciation of Christ, and a better knowledge of what is connected with the Spirit. One is impressed by the prominence given in this chapter to the priestly service rendered towards the healed leper. There is first discernment as to his being healed, and then ability to do all that is necessary for his cleansing and reinstatement in complete clearance, freedom and dignity in relation to the tent of meeting.

In verses 21 - 32 we have gracious provision for the one who is poor, and whose hand is "not able to get" the normal offerings. This reminds us that God considers, and His priests consider, the spiritual means and ability of those who need cleansing. "What is regularly prescribed" may not be obtainable in all cases. In such cases one lamb and two turtle-doves take the place of the three lambs in the normal offering; and one tenth part of fine flour mingled with oil is accepted for the oblation instead of three tenth parts in the normal offering. The same apprehensions of Christ have to be there, with their corresponding self-judgment, but a smaller measure is accepted when one is poor. There is a compassionate taking account of the means of the one concerned. The precious and tender grace disclosed in this is "good to the feeblest heart".

The "leprous plague in a house of the land of your possession" (verse 34) would refer to an assembly character of things. It is something which affects the way in which saints are set together. And this not looked at as in wilderness conditions but in relation to their enjoyment together of what is over Jordan. The normal privilege of the assembly is to enjoy in "house" conditions what is beyond death, and what is heavenly in character. If something comes in to disturb those "house" conditions, and to interfere with the comfort and restfulness of the saints together, it is easy to see that the mutual enjoyment of the land of their possession will be suspended. If roots of bitterness and envyings and jealousies come in they interfere with peaceful "house" conditions. Principles begin to work which are not suited to divine holiness, nor in accord with the truth of the house of God.

When such things come in the first thing is to recognize that God has allowed it. Indeed it says, "And *I* put a leprous plague", etc. It is an exercise the Lord has brought upon us to bring to light the true state of things, and to teach His saints needed lessons, and to make manifest those whom He approves (1 Corinthians 11: 19). When difficulties arise we are apt to get occupied with facts and persons, and not to take sufficient account of what the Lord may have to say in connection with it. But we should first of all ask, What is the Lord calling attention to by this state of things?

We find here a responsible person — "he whose house it is". "The angel of the assembly" in the New Testament (Revelation 2, Revelation 3) would answer to this. I doubt if there is anything of assembly character without an "angel". The "angel" is that element which is conscious of responsibility to the Lord, and which takes up exercises that arise in the light of that responsibility. We ought all to feel that we have a responsibility as to the "house"; something of "angel" character ought to be in every saint. We can all see defects; that does not

need spiritual vision. But to feel that responsibility attaches to one before the Lord as to the house and its conditions is another matter. If there is no "angel" one would hardly expect to find the priest there. For a due sense of responsibility taken up in sobriety with God would be essential to priestly conditions being present. The priestly element is that which considers for God, and has spiritual discernment. "He whose house it is shall come and tell the priest". The one who feels responsibility calls what is priestly into activity. Both brothers and sisters who have a care for the "house" are distressed if anything comes in which is not of God; they feel the seriousness of it, and cry to God about it. It was from the house of a sister (Chloe) that Paul heard of the disorder at Corinth. No doubt there was something of "angel" character about Chloe! Her name means "Tender verdure", which would be suggestive of the fact that being in spiritual freshness and vitality herself she and her house were sensitive as to the unhappy local conditions, and they seem to have told the "priest" by communicating with Paul. It is not only that those who love the Lord feel that His honour is affected, but they love the brethren, and they want the brethren to enjoy together the land of their possession. Leprosy in the house hinders the enjoyment of the land, and if we love the saints we cannot bear that they should be deprived of the spiritual joy of their possession. Every one of us should take a real and serious interest in the "house".

Then the priest is to command that the house be emptied before he goes into it. The principle seems to be that the uncleanness shall be limited as much as possible. The priest is not concerned to hold as much as possible unclean, but rather the contrary. He is anxious that everything that can be preserved from defilement shall be preserved.

The priest knows what the right colour of the house is; he knows the holiness, truth, grace and love which rightly mark "house" conditions. He knows the meekness and lowliness and forbearance in which saints can walk together in mutuality, and enjoy the land of their possession. So that when he goes into the house and sees "greenish or reddish hollows, and their look is deeper than the surface of the wall", he knows it is something quite different from the normal colour. It is something that is of the flesh working either on carnal or legal or mental lines. The priest knows it to be contrary to the true character of the house.

Now the question arises as to whether it is active, and as to how deeply things may be affected by it? It may possibly be the outcome of infirmity or ignorance, and not exactly will. Where *will* is working energetically the shutting up of the house seven days will make more manifest that it is so. But

if grace is in the ascendant it will be exerting its sway all the time to set aside through righteous self-judgment what is of the flesh. So that at the end of "seven days" the suspicious indications will be arrested or reduced. Patience is often needed to give time for the grace of the Lord to do its blessed work.

If the suspicious symptoms spread it is a bad sign. To see an evil principle spreading and getting a firmer hold gives the gravest concern to every one who cares for the well-being of the house. It shows that there is something that has to be positively rejected as unsuitable to the house. "The stones in which the plague is" are to be cast out in an unclean place. I take it that these stones represent principles that are not of God. They have to be absolutely rejected. If individuals identify themselves with such principles and seek to make them an integral part of the "house", and maintain this in face of instruction and admonition, they can only be regarded, for the time at any rate, as identified with the principles they espouse.

If we seek to maintain suitable "house" conditions we shall be called upon to exercise priestly discernment as to the character of the stones which go to make up the house. Can we accept that human order and clerical rule, or anything that is in principle sectarian, are suitable stones for the "house"? Can we believe that it is of God that christian fellowship should continue with one who teaches false doctrine as to the Person or work of our Lord Jesus Christ, or who questions the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures? Can we admit the principle of independency into our "house" conditions if we have learned that there is one body and one spirit, and but one divine and spiritual order universally? Can neutrality be pleasing to the Lord when questions arise with reference to what is vital? Can anything be really suitable to God without moral conditions and spiritual vitality? Can anything be really clean that sets aside any part of the truth concerning Christ and the assembly?

"Overthrowing reasonings and every high thing that lifts itself up against the knowledge of God, and leading captive every thought into the obedience of the Christ" (2 Corinthians 10: 5) would get rid of every leprous stone, and would secure suitable "house" conditions so that saints might enjoy together the land of their possession. In rejecting leprous stones the thought is that we disallow that which is contrary to the true character and blessing of all saints. If we refuse a wrong and unclean principle to which some of our brethren adhere, our refusing it is really a kind and true service to them. In refusing it we are acting on their behalf, and for their good. Because what is unsuitable to divine "house" conditions is unsuitable to all those who by divine grace and calling are entitled to participate in those conditions; that is, all saints. It is in love to all saints that every principle is to be refused which priestly

examination has proved to be unclean. Such action will probably very often be misunderstood, but we must be content to leave this to be cleared up in the day when all things are manifested.

If true believers will identify themselves with principles which are not of God we cannot put them right, but we can pray for them, and for ourselves that we may more clearly discern what is suitable to "house" conditions, and how indispensable those conditions are to the enjoyment of the land of our possession.

After the leprous stones have been cast out the house is to be scraped, and the dust poured out in an unclean place. The seriousness of having been associated with what is unclean has to be felt throughout the house; there is no going on as if nothing had happened. People say sometimes, after serious "house" exercises have been raised, We are just going on the same as we were before. But this cannot be if the Lord has been calling attention to something that ought to be removed. The scraping of the house brings home to all the gravity of the issue raised, and the necessity for complete purification.

But things do not stop there. "And they shall take other stones, and put them in the place of those stones; and they shall take other mortar, and shall plaster the house". It is not only that human and corrupting principles are to be judged and refused, but there is to be positive gain by replacing them by principles which are according to truth and holiness, and the very face of things — the plaster of the house — has to be brought into keeping therewith. If saints discover that they have been associated with some principle that was not of God, and they cast it out,

and replace it with what they have learned to be according to the commandments of the Lord, they will find it necessary to renew the "plaster" also. The very face of things in the house — the way things are done, and all that comes into view — will take a changed character.

But this scripture suggests that there may be cases where not even the removal of leprous stones and the introduction of new ones, and the re-plastering of the house, will put matters right. "And if the plague come again ... it is a corroding leprosy in the house; it is unclean". There is no remedy for such a state of things. "They shall break down the house, the stones of it, and the timber thereof, and all the mortar of the house, and shall carry them forth out of the city to an unclean place". In this case it becomes manifest that things cannot be divinely corrected or adjusted. There is something radically wrong with the whole principle of the house. It is not that certain features have had place which are not of God and which may be dealt with under

priestly direction so that the "house" is preserved in suitable condition. But in such a case as is typified here the whole principle of association is contrary to God's mind, and has to be rejected altogether. One cannot doubt that there are houses of this kind today. Houses which are leprous because the whole principle of their constitution carries the impress of the mind and will of man rather than the impress of the mind and will of God.

If the plague does not spread in the house "after the house hath been plastered, the priest shall pronounce the house clean; for the plague is healed". The leprous stones having been rejected, and new ones put in, and the house plastered, it is now found after priestly examination that the plague is arrested. But another exercise remains to be taken up even after the plague is healed, and the house pronounced clean. It has still to be purged from the defilement (verse 49), and this by bringing in positive apprehensions and appreciations of Christ, as set forth in type in verses 49 - 53. If these were not present, wrong principles might be rejected, and right ones accepted, without the fellowship being really spiritual. The way we are set together must take character from our appreciation of Christ, or we cannot enjoy together in an undefiled way our "house" conditions, or the land of our possession.

In the case of leprosy in a house I have no doubt we see typified an action of human will in the principles on which the people of God walk together. There is purification from the defilement of that in the appreciation of Christ, for in Him we see an entirely different principle of moral being. He came into the world saying, "Lo, I come (in the roll of the book it is written of me) to do, O God; thy will" (Hebrews 10: 7). In considering Him we come under the influence of what will cleanse us from the hidden, subtle root of all that is unclean.

The cedar-wood, scarlet and hyssop are put along with the blood and the running water and the living bird for the purging of the house (verse 52). Everything truly great and glorious is seen in Christ joined with a lowliness that made Him the Servant of all. God has taken us in hand so that we may get, through our affections being engaged with Christ, an entirely new thought of greatness. The will of man always works along the line of making something of himself,

or pleasing himself. But "the Christ also did not please himself" (Romans 15: 3). Gabriel said of Him to the virgin, "He shall be great", but it was the greatness of One who was to lie in a manger, and not to have where to lay His head. If we are truly great it will put us in the lowliest place here. When the disciples wanted to learn who was greatest in the kingdom of the heavens, Jesus called a little child to Him, and said, "Whoever therefore shall humble

himself as this little child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of the heavens" (Matthew 18: 1 - 4).

The "hyssop" suggests the lowliness of Christ. Solomon's wisdom embraced all the trees "from the cedar-tree that is on Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall" (1 Kings 4: 33). Christ expressed the whole range of moral perfection and beauty. The excellent bearing and dignity of the cedar was there, and the lowliness of the hyssop. He could truly say, "My heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty" (Psalm 131: 1). And all the "scarlet" in Him — everything that distinguished Him from others — was of God; there was no element of man's will in it. When Peter and those who were with him on the holy mount fully woke up they saw His glory, but it was glory that shone in a praying Man, who received all from God the Father in absolute dependence, and took no glory from Satan or from men. He is the One who says, "Come to me ... learn from me; for I am meek and lowly *in heart*" (Matthew 11: 28 - 30). We cannot entertain the thought of that in our affections without being purified from everything that is of the nature of leprosy. If I am truly a little child in the arms of Jesus I shall not readily take offence, and when offended I shall be very ready to forgive. (See Matthew 18) This brings in a spirit which provides good "house" conditions.

If there have been leprous stones — which speak of elements coming in characterized by the will of the flesh — they have to be replaced by such features as were characteristic of Christ. Any greatness or glory or even voluntary humility that is of the will of man has to go out. Perhaps this is suggested in the cedar and scarlet and hyssop being cast by the priest into the burning of the red heifer (Numbers 19). The cedar and scarlet and hyssop go into the fire, there to be consumed — never to come out again. But in Leviticus 14 the cedar and scarlet and hyssop are dipped in the blood; they go into death in type; but they come out again for the purifying of the man or the house. All the excellent bearing, and distinction, and humility of Christ were devoted to the will and glory of God in death, but God has approved them all by resurrection. There was nothing morally in Christ that could remain in death, or be held there. If *I* went into death there is a good deal that would never appear again, and I can say, Thank God; that it will not. But with Him there was nothing that death could hold; every moral feature that was seen in Him has come out of death to appear and be perpetuated in the saints as having the Spirit of Christ; to appear in a healed and purified Israel in a future day; and indeed to give character to the moral universe, purifying it from every taint of creature will. Before the day of public purifying the blood, the running water, the living bird, the cedar-wood, the hyssop and the scarlet are the spiritual means by which the defilement of creature will can be cleansed

either in an individual, or in what pertains to the "house" conditions in which God sets His saints together. But *cleansing* only takes place after *healing*. If self-will has been active there must be first God-given repentance.

If everything great and glorious and suitable to God, and attractive to my heart as taught of God, has gone into death here, what does it make of any greatness or distinction that I could attach to myself as in the flesh? The silver cord has been loosed, and the golden bowl broken! Can I want to assert my will, or to be distinguished in any way, in the place where Christ died? If I wish to retain what is of the will of the flesh I cannot have a true appreciation of Christ, for in Him there is nothing but what is of the will of God. For Christians not to judge what is evil in their associations is very serious. "Cease to do evil: learn to do well" is an important word in this connection. Whatever the conditions of weakness may be the Lord will always help faithful ones to disown evil principles, and give evidence that they are calling on Him out of a pure heart.

These chapters (Leviticus 13, Leviticus 14) have no doubt an application to Israel as well as a present bearing. The sin of Miriam and of Gehazi and of Uzziah are typical of the guilt into which Israel has fallen, and the leprosy with which they were smitten is a figure of Israel's state today. Israel's house, too, is leprous today, but it will yet be healed in the sovereignty of God's mercy, and will be purged and made clean by the application of all that is typified in Leviticus 14: 51, 52, and Israel will dwell in holy and happy conditions in the land of their possession.

LEVITICUS 15

Leviticus 15

The “flux” which according to this chapter renders unclean would, I think, represent those defiling things which are the outcome of what we are naturally. We have seen in chapter 11 most careful directions as to clean and unclean in what might be eaten. It was there a question, in type, of what we receive into our moral being. But chapter 15 gives us the converse of this; it refers to defiling things which come out of us. Peter could say, “Common or unclean has never entered into my mouth” (Acts 11: 8), but he could not have said that nothing common or unclean had ever come out of his mouth! This chapter suggests the possibility of that coming out of a man or woman which would render unclean. It teaches us that if we would preserve the moral purity that is suited to God’s tabernacle (verse 31) there must be restraint on manifestations of what we are naturally.

The cases brought before us here are obviously less serious than those contemplated in chapters 13, 14. There is no exclusion from the camp here, but there is a distinct call for exercise and moral cleansing. There is a great deal about washing, bathing, and rinsing, and it is not until these exercises have been gone through, and cleansing effected, that the person who has had a “flux” can take up holy privilege in relation to God’s tabernacle.

There are many things which are not exactly actions of sinful will, but which are the outcome of what a man is naturally. The outflow of that which should be kept under restraint is defiling. When Paul said to the high priest, “God will smite thee, whited wall”, it was probably true, and an expression of righteous indignation, but it was very different from the calm dignity with which the Lord spoke when smitten on the face. Paul appeared to feel at once, when his attention was called to it, that there had been a lack of self-restraint. How quickly he washed himself!

A thing may be true, but it may not be at all of the Spirit of God that it should be expressed. To express it might just be the unchecked outflow of what is natural to one. We have to learn that if we would retain liberty in what is spiritual there must be restraint on what is natural. That is a simple statement, but it is a vital one. Normal Christian walk is “according to Spirit” (Romans 8: 4), and it is well to challenge what comes out of us sometimes by asking whether it is of the Spirit of God? If we do not exercise restraint on what we might give expression to naturally we shall find ourselves defiled, and out of condition for the holy relations in which we stand to God’s tabernacle.

Paul could say, "By God's grace I am what I am" (1 Corinthians 15: 10). That is in contrast to what he was naturally. All our deportment, whether with one another or in presence of the world, should be by the grace of God. "For our boasting is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and sincerity before God (not in fleshly wisdom but in God's grace), we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly towards you", (2 Corinthians 1: 12). If all is by the grace of God there will be no "flux" to bring defilement. The Christian walking normally speaks and acts by the grace of God, and according to the Spirit. "See that no one render to any evil for evil, but pursue always what is good towards one another and towards all; rejoice always; pray unceasingly;

in everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus towards you" (1 Thessalonians 5: 15 - 19). Such a walk is to the spiritual man holy and blessed liberty. If we wish to be preserved from what answers to the "flux" of Leviticus 15 we must cultivate what is spiritual and according to Christ, so that what comes out of us is according to God. The grace which carries with it salvation teaches us to "live soberly, and justly, and piously in the present course of things" (Titus 2: 11, 12). There will then be no "flux" to defile. A humorous tendency, or any unchecked manifestation of one's natural temperament, might become a "flux".

The washing, bathing, and rinsing of this chapter suggest a purification which is according to God, and suited to His tabernacle. The New Testament, in speaking of the assembly being purified "by the washing of water by the word" (Ephesians 5: 26), gives us the thought of a moral purification brought about by the word. The word brings what is of Christ to bear upon us to the setting aside of that which is unclean. In John 15: 3 the Lord says, "Ye are already clean by reason of the word which I have spoken to you". His word had made Him known in their hearts, and they were clean as having Him in their affections. The "word" as in Ephesians 5: 26 cleanses by bringing home to us the way which His love took in delivering Himself up for the assembly. All that was involved in His death is applied to us for purification in a moral way by the word.

In Leviticus 15 the person who has been defiled, or who has come into contact with defilement, has to wash and bathe. He has, in figure, to apply the word to himself as one exercised in the fear of God.

He subjects himself and his manner of life to the moral action and purifying of the word. We see the principle of this in Psalm 119: 9. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his path? by taking heed according to thy word". It is an inestimable favour from God that the word is available for cleansing. There is

an abundant supply of water — of what is divinely suitable for application in the way of cleansing to any one who has been defiled, but who wishes to be clean. The “word” has positive purifying power, for it brings what is of God, and what has been set forth in Christ, to bear upon that which has occasioned defilement. We see how unsuitable to God and to Christ are the unrestrained manifestations of what we are naturally. They are set aside by that which is more excellent getting place with us through the word.

I do not really use the “word” thus apart from considering and weighing what it communicates, and forming an estimate in my renewed mind of its excellency. There is often too much superficiality about the way Scripture is read. Nothing profits me that does not come to my soul as a divine communication, leading me to judge and disapprove what is evil because I “judge of and approve the things that are more excellent”. This would lead to being “pure and without offence for Christ’s day, being complete as regards the fruit of righteousness, which is by Jesus Christ, to God’s glory and praise” (Philippians 1: 9 - 11). Such would be truly clean.

The seven days of cleansing in this chapter, and the sin-offering and burnt-offering of the eighth day, are features the typical import of which corresponds with what we have considered in connection with the cleansing of the leper in chapter 14.

LEVITICUS 16

Leviticus 16

It will be observed that this chapter reverts to chapter 10 in referring to the two sons of Aaron who “came near before Jehovah and died”. It comes in after the failure of the priesthood, in which we may see an intimation of the breakdown of the whole system as having been set up in connection with man after the flesh. Even Aaron himself was not to come “at all times into the sanctuary inside the veil ... *that he die not*”. If coming into the immediate presence of God meant death for the greatest personage in the system it was clear proof that man after that order — man in the flesh — could not draw near. Typically the whole system of the tabernacle and its sacrifices spoke of Christ and of His death, but it was actually set up in connection with failing and mortal men. Hence there was a complete breakdown on man’s side on the first day of their service. Instead of being capable of serving God and approaching God, man in the flesh is a complete failure, and is under the judgment of death.

The tabernacle and its ordinances indicated that it was God’s pleasure to dwell in the midst of a redeemed people, and to be approached by men, but it also indicated just as plainly that what God desired could only be brought about in a spiritual order of things. “The Holy Spirit showing this, that the way of the holy of holies has not yet been made manifest while as yet the first tabernacle has its standing” (Hebrews 9: 8).

Then in this chapter it is not only that Aaron’s sons have died, and that Aaron himself is forbidden to come inside the veil at all times on pain of death, but the children of Israel generally as set in relation to the sanctuary and the tent of meeting are seen to be marked by uncleanness, iniquities, transgressions and sins, from which the sanctuary and the tent of meeting need to be cleansed. Atonement needs to be made for Aaron and for his house, and for the whole congregation. It is not now, as in former chapters of this book, what relates to the sin, trespass, or defilement of an individual Israelite, or even one specific sin of the whole assembly. The question raised is a far deeper and wider one. It is a question of the footing on which the priestly house and the whole congregation can be with God as having His dwelling amongst them in holiness. This question was typically raised and settled “once a year” for Israel, but the continual repetition of it year by year served to show that the question was not really settled. “For blood of bulls and goats is incapable of taking away sins” (Hebrews 10: 4). It was a yearly reminder that this question needed to be settled, and a prophetic intimation that it would be settled fully

and eternally by the offering of Christ. Read Hebrews 9 and 10, and see how the Spirit of God contrasts the repeated offerings of the yearly day of atonement with the manifestation of Christ "once in the consummation of the ages ... for the putting away of sin by his sacrifice". He emphasizes that Christ has "been once offered to bear the sins of many", and that by God's will "we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all". "But *he*, having offered one sacrifice for sins, sat down in perpetuity at the right hand of God For by one offering he has perfected in perpetuity the sanctified". He "by his own blood has entered in once for all into the holy of holies, having found an eternal redemption".

It may be well to note the difference between the death of Christ as set forth in the Passover and in the sin-offering of the day of atonement. The Passover is necessary on our side, if we are to escape judgment and to have a place in the kingdom of God; it will be "fulfilled in the kingdom of God" (Luke 22: 16), when men will be relieved of judgment, and be brought into unity as under the sway of God known in righteous grace and blessing. But the sin-offering of the day of atonement deals with the question of sin from the standpoint of how it affects God in the abode of His holiness. It stands in reference to "the holy sanctuary", and "the tent of meeting", and "the altar". It has in view God dwelling in holiness, and the thought of man's approach to Him. Every moral stain must be removed so that there may be suitability to God in the place where He dwells in unsullied light and holiness. The sin-offering of the day of atonement goes to the very root of the question of sin as it affects the glory of God, and shows how God has glorified Himself in holiness with reference to sin so that He can have His once-sinful creatures near Him without a single spot or stain of unsuitability to the place where He displays all His brightness.

The Passover will be fulfilled in the kingdom of God, but the sin-offering of the day of atonement — while its value is known today, and will be known in the world to come — stands in relation to what is eternal. It is one of the greatest and most far-reaching types that Scripture presents to us.

"I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy-seat" (verse 2). The two sons of Aaron had died, Aaron was forbidden to come at all times inside the veil "that he die not", and the people as a whole were marked, as we have said, by uncleanness and iniquities. But God would retain His dwelling among them, and appear in the cloud upon the mercy-seat. On what ground could this be? Only on the ground of the sin offering, and the blood as sprinkled on the mercy-seat.

The state common to all the children of Adam was found in Israel also. Their peculiar privileges in having the law, and having God's sanctuary in their

midst, only added the guilt of positive transgression, and brought out their uncleanness in a way of which the Gentile was unconscious. So that when the people of Israel truly and spiritually observe the day of atonement they will discover that, instead of being better than the Gentiles, their guilt was only intensified by the place of nearness to God into which they were brought. In principle this is true of those who are outwardly brought near to God in the christian profession today.

Then on what ground can blessing be? It can only be on the ground of mercy and atonement on God's side, and on man's side affliction of soul — repentance — and the recognition of the fact that he can do nothing. "Ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all" (verse 29). But this is a ground of blessing which, if God pleases to have it so, is available for all men. So that "the stranger" is expressly included (verse 29), and we know now that "the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ" is "towards all, and upon all those who believe: for there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth a mercy-seat, through faith in his blood" (Romans 3: 21 - 26).

This gives the mercy-seat, and the blood put upon it on the day of atonement, a very wide bearing, and justifies us in regarding Leviticus 16 in the light of the gospel. A very wide scope of blessing has come in, consequent upon the complete breakdown of everything connected with man in the flesh, which has been specially set forth in Israel. The atonement for Aaron and his house has special typical reference to those who have the Spirit today, and constitute the priestly house. The atonement as made for the whole congregation would have a bearing towards the whole christian profession. But Romans 3 gives the mercy-seat and the blood upon it a universal aspect which shows that in the mind of God the scope of what was typified on the day of atonement is not less than all men, or as Paul says in Colossians 1: 23, "the whole creation which is under heaven". God's righteousness being made known in grace through atonement, in view of the blessing of the assembly today and of Israel in a coming day, really makes known what He is in His nature, and in the disposition of His heart towards men. It is the shining out of what God is in His nature and in His holy glory. Eventually the moral universe — of which the tabernacle is a figure — will be reconciled in the value of what is typified here, and evil will be eternally confined to its own place in the lake of fire.

Aaron does not go into the sanctuary to make atonement in his garments "for glory and for ornament" described in Exodus 28. They set forth what Christ is as the living Priest who ever appears before the face of God for those who

believe on Him. But *here* it is not glory and ornament, but righteousness and holiness. "A holy linen vest ...

linen trousers ... a linen girdle ... the linen mitre ... these are holy garments". They speak of the personal holiness of Christ as the One who knew no sin. "The holy one of God", as Peter confessed Him (John 6: 69). The One of whom it is written, "Thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol, neither wilt thou allow thy Holy One to see corruption" (Psalm 16: 10). "Jesus Christ the righteous ... is the propitiation for our sins; but not for ours alone, but also for the whole world" (1 John 2: 1, 2). No other could take up the question of sin, and meet the glory of God about it so as to make atonement.

There is a marked distinction throughout this chapter between what is for Aaron and his house, and what is "for the people". The one gives the ground of blessing for the priestly family — typically the assembly as associated with Christ; the other the ground of Israel's blessing in the world to come, but the value of which is also known by believers today, though it is not the distinctive portion of saints of the assembly. The distinction is thus clearly made between the heavenly company, represented by Aaron and his house, and Israel as called to inherit blessing on earth. There is also a distinction between Aaron and his sons (Exodus 28) and Aaron and his house. His "house" is a wider thought; it is more the family idea, and would take in daughters also. Atonement in this chapter is for his "house". It is the priestly family and its privileges that is in view rather than the exercise of priestly functions.

For Aaron and his house there is "a young bullock for a sin-offering, and a ram for a burnt-offering". For the assembly of the children of Israel there are "two bucks of the goats for a sin-offering, and one ram for a burnt-offering". Aaron is first to present the bullock of the sin-offering which is for himself, and then he is to take the two goats for the people. Verses 6 - 10 seem to be a general statement; the detail follows.

The offering of the bullock for the priestly family comes before the offering of the goats for Israel. The blessing of Israel will come in after the blessing of the assembly, and indeed their blessing will be dependent upon ours. I suppose Abraham had some sense of this when "he waited for the city which has foundations, of which God is the artificer and constructor" (Hebrews 11: 10). He understood that the time of blessing on earth would be dependent on the appearance of God's heavenly city. "God having foreseen some better thing for us, that they should not be made perfect without us" (Hebrews 11: 40). Whether it be the heavenly place and portion of the assembly, or blessing on earth as known by millennial Israel, all is secured according to divine

righteousness and holiness by the complete glorifying of God as to the whole question of sin and sins.

The assembly takes precedence of Israel, and with a larger offering. No redeemed family will know the greatness of Christ sacrificially in the same measure as the assembly knows it. "For himself, and for his house" shows how Christ identifies Himself with the assembly, and the assembly with Him. Believers do not need to be told that no atonement for Him was needed in the sense of dealing with anything personal. But He identified Himself with the sin of His own on the cross, and He has gone in to God on the ground of His own blood. That is, He is not there simply on the ground of His personal title, but on the ground of having died. He is with God on the same ground that we can be with God. Our Aaron loves to be with God on ground where He can be identified with His saints and His saints with Him. See Hebrews 9: 11, 12. The bullock of the sin-offering for Aaron and his house is first presented and slaughtered. This precedes the going of Aaron inside the veil with the censer, and both his hands full of fragrant incense. God presents to us in type the death of Christ before He directs our attention to the fragrant incense. It is necessary that we should have a large apprehension of Christ as having gone into death as the sin-offering to set us free to contemplate the cloud of incense that covers the mercy-seat.

The first thing that has place "inside the veil" is the censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before Jehovah, and Aaron with "both his hands full of fragrant incense beaten small ... And he shall put the incense upon the fire before Jehovah, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy-seat". Outside is the slaughtered bullock, speaking of Christ in death for the glory of God as the sin-offering; but "inside the veil" are the censer, the burning coals, and the cloud of incense covering the mercy-seat. It gives us a wondrous thought of what has the first place with God in relation to the sin offering.

Scripture leads us to connect the thought of prayer with incense. "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense" (Psalm 141: 2). "All the multitude of the people were praying without at the hour of incense" (Luke 1: 10). See also Revelation 8: 3, 4. This leads me to conclude that the cloud of incense which covers the mercy-seat represents the perfect answer in confidence of heart which was given by Christ to God when tested to the utmost possible degree by the holy fire. Perhaps we do not give this the place that is due. We think of His death as maintaining divine glory in the highest as to sin. We can never think too much of this; it will be the theme of eternal wonder and praise. We think of the precious blood in its infinite efficacy and atoning power. We can never think too much of it. But let us not forget that the mercy-seat

has been covered by the cloud of incense! One has been found in the place of supreme testing who has expressed in that place what was most fragrant to God.

How little can we enter into, or speak of, the sorrows and sufferings of our Saviour and Lord! They will be for ever a fathomless depth. How could the creature ever know what it was to the Holy One to be made sin? or what it was to the One who had ever delighted to do the will of God to be forsaken by Him? Or what it was to the Prince of Life to taste death? Or what it meant to the Lord Jesus to feel the unutterable and manifold grief and anguish which were inseparable from passing through man's hour and the power of darkness? His was the loneliness of a sorrow which none could share, and with which none could sympathize for none could understand.

But what did it bring out God-ward? The cloud of fragrant incense! And if we enter at all into what that hour involved, and what it meant to Him, we have learned it from that cloud of incense. Under the action of the holy fire the fragrance came out. The sorrow Psalms of the suffering Messiah bring it before us. The affections and sensibilities of the Lord were supremely tested, but the testing brought out infinite fragrance. We need to be in the holy of holies to know what that incense means; it can only be contemplated in a spirit of adoration.

In Psalm 22 He is the forsaken One, but in that darkest of all hours He confides in God, and He says, "Thou art holy". Four times He says, "My God"; once He appeals to Jehovah as "My strength". "Thou art he that took me out of the womb; thou didst make me trust, upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb; thou art my God from my mother's belly". Such was the unspeakable perfection of the holy Sufferer! His trust had been always absolutely in God, and it was still there though tested as never before. He looked to God alone amid the anguish, darkness and forsaking of the cross. He had no other help, no other confidence; He stayed Himself upon His God — upon the One who in holiness had forsaken Him, and laid Him in the dust of death. The intense heat of the altar fire brought out this incense. We are not thinking, for the moment, of atonement, but of what the atoning sufferings and sorrows brought out — the holy perfection of His affections and sensibilities, and the confidence of His heart in God. This, if I apprehend it aright, was the cloud of incense that covered the mercy-seat.

Let us pass for a moment to Psalm 40, where He puts Himself in the place of all those sacrifices and oblations, burnt-offerings and sin-offerings which had failed to meet the desire or the demand of God. Coming into the world to do God's good pleasure, and to make known God's righteousness, faithfulness,

salvation, loving-kindness and truth, it involves that innumerable evils compass Him about. He has to say, "Mine iniquities (or punishments) have taken hold upon me ... they are more than the hairs of my head". The iniquities, or punishments, which He made His own were ours, for we well know He had none personally.

"Our sins, our guilt, in love divine,
Confessed and borne by Thee".

In taking all this up He must needs experience "the pit of destruction" and "the miry clay". But what was the attitude of His Spirit God-ward in it all? "I waited patiently for Jehovah". He "made Jehovah his confidence". The spirit of obedience was there, for *His* God had prepared ears for Him; His body was entirely for God's will, even in being devoted to death. The will of God was His delight, and in His affections. Amidst all that the sin-offering involved the consideration of His heart was for God; and that God's innumerable thoughts toward men might be brought into effect. The fragrance of all that has covered the mercy-seat.

Psalms 69 presents that Blessed One to us as sinking in "deep mire, where there is no standing", and as having to say, "They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head". Reproach has broken His heart; He is overwhelmed. "I looked for sympathy, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. Yea, they gave me gall for my food, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink". But what is the attitude of His spirit? He waits for His God (verse 3); He restores that which He took not away (verse 4); it is for God's sake that He bears reproach (verse 7); the zeal of God's house devours Him (verse 9). And in the midst of all the reproach and the grief and the weeping, He says, "But as for me, my prayer is unto thee, Jehovah, in an acceptable time" (verse 13). He counts upon Jehovah to answer Him (verse 10). All this has its place in the cloud of incense. It covers the mercy-seat. Man has failed to answer rightly to God in innocence, without law, or under law. But this glorious and holy One, the Son of God, the Christ of God, has answered perfectly to Him in the place of sin and death.

Not only is atonement made, but God has been glorified in the highest by all that was found in the spirit of the holy One who made atonement. In the sufferings and sorrows of atonement, and in all that was connected with that dread hour in which atonement was made — man's wickedness and Satan's power in full strength as well as the forsaking of God — what came out in Him was fragrant to God. The mercy-seat is covered by the cloud of incense. All that God is, in what divine glory claims with regard to sin, has found its

perfect answer in a Man. It is not only that everything that needed to be removed has been removed in the efficacy of the blood which has satisfied every claim of God's holy glory in respect of sin. But one would desire to think with ever-growing appreciation of what came out in the spirit and sensibilities and affections of that Blessed One when in the place of making atonement. The infinite fragrance of that, I think we may say with absolute truth, gave God more delight than all the sin of man had given Him grief. It was the complete disclosure of the perfection of His beloved Son in Manhood.

One can understand, I trust, in measure how that cloud of incense preserved Aaron from death. The man after the flesh, even as represented in Israel's high priest, is under death. He cannot live in the presence of divine glory. But Aaron disappears — may we not say? — from the view of the mercy-seat as the cloud of incense covers it. The man after the flesh is not taken account of in the holiest. He is displaced by Another whose positive perfection renders infinite satisfaction and delight to God's attributes and nature. He answered perfectly to God even when His soul was being made an offering for sin. He answered perfectly to all that God is in mercy, and in holy glory that cannot tolerate sin. I am sure that it would deeply affect us if we meditated more on that incense. In this great type it comes before the blood. The blood is essential for us, and for God's glory too, but God loves that we should cherish in our hearts what was so fragrant to Him.

Then Aaron was to "take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle with his finger upon the front of the mercy-seat eastward; and before the mercy-seat shall he sprinkle of the blood seven times with his finger" (verse 14). It is a striking fact in these types that the blood of the sin-offering alone was brought into the sanctuary. The blood of the burnt-offering or the peace-offering did not go beyond the brazen altar, which I think would suggest that the burnt-offering has reference to the acceptance in favour in which we stand in the very place where we were under God's judgment, and the peace-offering is the basis of the fellowship to which we are called as here on earth. But the blood of the sin-offering goes into the sanctuary "inside the veil". It does not go out to the brazen altar. The altar in verse 18 is the golden altar — the place of priestly approach and intercession. See — Exodus 30: 10. The altar in verse 25 is the brazen altar where the burnt-offering is offered, and the fat of the sin-offering burned. This would represent the place of Israel's approach and acceptance in a coming day, which they will not come to until they have seen the Scapegoat go away, and really kept *their* day of atonement. Aaron has to "go forth" to the brazen altar when he has ended all that is done within, and after the scapegoat has been sent away. But the true and distinctive blessing of the present time is what is taken up within by the assembly as typified by

the sons and house of Aaron. It is our privilege to go in with the true Aaron, not only to serve in the holy place, but to be with Him in the sanctuary — the holiest of all.

The blood of the bullock for the priestly house, and the blood of “the goat of the sin-offering which is for the people”, are both put on and before the mercy-seat. There could be neither heavenly nor earthly blessing if the poured-out life of Christ as sin-offering had not glorified God in the highest. The blood is on the gold. Indeed, there could be no mercy-seat at all without the blood being on it, so that this chapter is needed to complete the type. Christ is both the Ark and the Mercy-seat. He came to bring in and establish the will of God; that is the Ark. But in a universe defiled by sin the will of God could only come in for blessing in the way of sovereign mercy. So that for the throne of God to take the character of a mercy-seat indicates that He wills to be known, and to bless, in spite of the moral stain that has come in. It tells what God is, who acts from Himself and for Himself in a universe that has become defiled by sin. The form of the phrase in Romans 3: 25, “Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth a mercy-seat”, indicates that He has done it on His own behalf. He has provided for His own glory, but in the way of mercy to the fallen creature.

But then this could not be apart from the vindication and manifestation of His righteousness in dealing judicially with that which was an offence to Him. This necessitates the death of Christ — the most stupendous fact in the moral universe. And now the blood is on the mercy-seat. God can be favourable to all men. He can justify and forgive sinners; He can place those who were sinful before Him in perfect suitability to Himself. He can have a people before Him in favour and blessing on the earth, or He can have a company of heavenly sons in association with a glorified and heavenly Christ. Christ Jesus is the Mercy-seat, and He is a risen and glorified Man in heaven. All the value of His death and blood-shedding subsists eternally in Himself. He is “set forth a mercy-seat, through faith in his blood”.

God can come out to men as having freed Himself by the death of Christ from man’s sin and uncleanness. He comes out as a Saviour God in all the value of Christ, and of His death for sin. It is the character of this “day of salvation” that all that God is as revealed in Christ is available for sinful men on the ground of what was accomplished when Christ suffered and died. In the holiest spot in the universe the sin of man is not to be seen. The mercy-seat and the blood are there.

The blood being sprinkled seven times before the mercy-seat witnesses that all that is in the view of the mercy-seat — the things on the earth and the

things in the heavens — will eventually be reconciled to the Godhead on the ground of peace being made by the blood of the cross (Colossians 1: 20). The things on the earth and the things in the heavens will be brought into correspondence with the holy nature of God. And at the present time the world is provisionally in reconciliation (Romans 11: 15). That is, God regards the world from the standpoint of Christ and of His death; He is favourable to all men, for the death of Christ has come in on behalf of all; and Christ is “the propitiation for our sins, but not for ours alone, but also for the whole world” (1 John 2: 2). Scripture does not say that He bore the sins of all, but He has done a work which has glorified God in relation to sins, and He is available, as having done that work “for the whole world”.

God has secured His own glory through the death of Christ so that all that is of Himself might remain in presence of the uncleanness of man. “He shall make atonement for the sanctuary, to cleanse it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and from their transgressions in all their sins; and so shall he do for the tent of meeting which dwelleth among them in the midst of their uncleanness” (verse 16). It is on the ground of the atonement made by the Sin-offering that God’s holy things remain among men. The camp of Israel represents those who are, in profession at any rate, the people of God. That there is much in the sphere of christian profession that is displeasing to God, few would deny. But on God’s part His holy things remain, and are available for men. God can be near to men with a free hand and a free heart to bless. The sins of men do not hinder God from being near to them in blessing, for He views all according to His appreciation of the blood on the mercy-seat. All may come, if they will, into the value of the death of Christ with God.

Then the Spirit of God is here dwelling in the saints; the “true tabernacle” remains with all its holy furnishings; “the testimony of the Christ” is still here. And the fact that these things are known as spiritual realities by many, and that they are remarkable features in the present ways of God, and that such things subsist notwithstanding all the evil that is in man and the iniquity that is in the christian profession, is a great and powerful witness to the value of the death of Christ as before God.

Making atonement for the altar (verses 18, 19) refers to the place of priestly approach and service within, for it is the golden altar. See Exodus 30: 10. The blood of the bullock and of the goat are put upon it as well as on and before the mercy-seat. The blessing of the assembly (represented by Aaron’s house), and the blessing of Israel (represented by “the people”), are both bound up with the fact that Christ has entered “into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us”. He appears there in all the value of the blood of the

Sin-offering. He is there for the priestly house who are "partakers of the heavenly calling", and when the assembly is removed at the rapture to its own heavenly place He will be there for the remnant of Israel. Indeed Israel has a memorial "before Jehovah" in that blessed Priest all through the time of His being in heaven. "God has not cast away his people whom he foreknew", for "the gifts and calling of God are not subject to repentance". Christ in heaven is the sure Pledge that "all Israel shall be saved", and will come into "their fulness" for the wealth of the world and the nations. (See Romans 11) Israel does not know it, alas! for "blindness in part has happened" to them, but saints of the assembly know well that Israel's blessing, as well as their own, is bound up with the place that Christ has taken "before the face of God".

What we have here typically is what the New Testament speaks of as the purification of the heavenly things (Hebrews 9: 23, 24). It is most important for us to understand this, for the whole character of our blessing and approach to God hangs upon it, and it also determines the place which we take up in relation to religious things on earth. I suppose all Christians have the conviction that if they went to heaven they would find themselves in a place where there was no sin, and where all the conditions were suitable to God, and therefore where there was no cloud or sense of distance! But how many Christians have taken into consideration that there is a system of heavenly things into which we can come now, and in the blessedness of which we can approach God — a system so divinely purified by the blood of the Sin-offering that there is not a trace of sin in it? But this is what the epistle to the Hebrews opens up to us. We learn there that God has spoken to us in the Person of the Son, and He would have us to approach Him in the light of all that He has spoken. He has provided in the Sin-offering for the removal of everything that would have hindered this. The Son has "made by himself the purification of sins" (Hebrews 1: 3). That means not merely that they are removed from the sinner, but they are removed from before God. They are no longer in His presence; to defile His tabernacle.

"Propitiation for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2: 17) would refer to the Sin-offering as meeting the glory of God about those sins in such a way that Christ has a righteous ground on which He can "be a merciful and faithful high priest", and can "help those that are being tempted". The question of sins has been so dealt with that it does not remain to hinder the service of the Priest on behalf of His people, who are viewed in Hebrews 2: 18 as being still in the place of temptation.

Christ having "been manifested for the putting away of sin by his sacrifice" (Hebrews 9: 26), the heavenly things are purified. We can come into the

region of heavenly things, and find that there is not a trace of sin there. This is simply a question of the value and efficacy of the blood of the Sin-offering. But then that blood has also furnished what purifies the conscience of believers "from dead works to worship the living God" (Hebrews 9: 14). We have to do now with a sacrifice which not only purifies the heavenly things, but perfects those who approach. Such is the value of the Sin-offering that it perfects as to conscience. "The worshippers once purged having no longer any conscience of sins". We know that we have sinned, but Christ has "offered one sacrifice for sins", and "by one offering he has perfected in perpetuity the sanctified" (Hebrews 10: 12, 14). It is entirely what has been effected by the Sin-offering. We must not mix it up with the thought of anything wrought in us; it is the wondrous work of Christ alone; "and the Holy Spirit also bears us witness of it". The Holy Spirit witnesses of what has been effected by the Sin-offering. As to conscience we are purged and perfected; we can approach God on the ground and in the value of the Sin-offering.

On this ground we have "boldness for entering into the holy of holies by the blood of Jesus". Have we weighed what this means? It does not say that all believers go in, but it tells us our privilege, and says, "Let us approach with a true heart, in full assurance of faith". A true heart is a heart responsive to God, knowing His love. In Hebrews 8: 10 God puts the mind before the heart, because it is a question there of knowing God — of intelligence as to what God is as made known by the Mediator. That is the side of God's approach to us; we must be enlightened before we can love. But in chapter 10 the subject before the mind of the Spirit is our approach to God, so in verse 16 He puts the heart first. God secures the affections of His people so that they may love Him, and love the great Priest, and desire to approach because they love. Then understanding follows, and the more understanding they get the more free they are to approach.

We approach as having "a great priest over the house of God". It is the attraction of the Priest, and the consciousness of having His support, that draws us in in the power of affection. The One who has sympathized with me and succoured me in His tender love and grace in the pathway here, the One I have "long proved in secret help", attracts me to the place where He is with God "within the veil". How "great" is that heavenly Priest! Great in the glory of His Person; great in His love! What attraction there is to approach! We have a Priest who has gone within the veil, and we approach by Him to God. If we approach by Him His nearness is the measure of ours. A better hope has been introduced by which we draw nigh to God. It is this which gives Christian approach such a peculiar character; we approach in the blessedness of what is

within the veil, the present light and gain of an unseen and heavenly order of things.

The blessing of the heavenly company *within* transcends the blessing of Israel. The Bullock for the priestly house is greater than the Goat for Israel. I believe the Spirit magnifies Christ in Hebrews 1, Hebrews 2 to give us an apprehension of Him in that greatness that is typified in the bullock. It was without any design or desire on our part that we are in the time of the heavenly; we have had no choice in the matter. In the sovereign disposition of God He has brought us into being, and into blessing, in the time of the heavenly. What infinite favour! We can draw nigh now in the light, and consciousness by the Spirit, of all that will be made good actually when we are translated in the condition of purpose.

"O love supreme and bright!
Good to the feeblest heart,
That gives us now as heavenly light,
What soon shall be our part".

The true Aaron has gone in in the power of the blood of the Sin-offering.

"He's gone within the veil,
For us that place has won;
In Him we stand, a heavenly band,
Where He Himself is gone".

We can draw near, we can take our place with Him and with the blessed God according to what Christ is as having "by his own blood ... entered in once for all into the holy of holies, having found an eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9: 12). The priestly house is privileged to draw near, and to joy in God in the blessedness of all that subsists "within the veil".

Our calling is to those things which are "within" — a spiritual and heavenly order of privilege and blessing. Indeed to get the full character of Christian privilege and blessing we have to bring in the truth of other epistles as well as that to the Hebrews. The types give us a "shadow" but not "the image itself" of the good things that have come in christianity. 2 Corinthians 5 clearly refers to the sin-offering and its results. "Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in him". It is on the ground of the sin-offering that the saints are "in Christ", and "there is a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new: and all things are of the God who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ". This is

something altogether outside and apart from what we are according to flesh. The Christ in whom we are is a risen and glorified Man. We are introduced to an entirely new order of things in which all is complacent to God. If we look round in the old creation we see sin and death's stamp everywhere. But in Christ risen and glorified in heaven there is what God can indeed pronounce "Very good". "New creation" is outside the reach of sin and death; it is the whole order of things which centres in a risen and glorified Man in heaven. Such is the wondrous result of the Sin-offering — the saints become God's righteousness in Him. It has been remarked that this involves the glorified state.

If we turn to Colossians we learn the pleasure of the Fulness of the Godhead "by him to reconcile all things to itself, having made peace by the blood of his cross — by him, whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in mind by wicked works, yet now has it reconciled in the body of his flesh through death; to present you holy and unblamable and irreproachable before it" (Colossians 1: 19 - 22). This, again, gives us the Sin-offering and its results.

Then in the epistle to the Ephesians we have the full light of the heavenly. We read there that "Now in Christ Jesus ye who once were afar off are become nigh by the blood of the Christ For through him we have both (Jew and Gentile) access by one Spirit to the Father" (Ephesians 2: 13, 18). "The blood of the Christ" is the blood of the sin-offering which has been put on the mercy-seat and the golden altar so that we might be made nigh "in Christ Jesus". This gives us an entirely new state and place with God outside everything that was connected with us as living in the world. That we should be before God in Christ Jesus, holy and blameless, and "sons with Him who is above", is marvellous grace indeed. On the ground of the sin-offering God has given to those who believe a heavenly place and relationship according to His eternal purpose in Christ Jesus. Yea, we are "taken into favour in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1: 6). That is in the glorified Man, the Object of the Father's love in heaven, the One who said, "I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14: 2). Have we really taken this in? That His going to the Father has made that heavenly place ours? He is coming to receive us actually into the place where He is, but it is *our place now* as much as it will be when we are actually in it.

In Ephesians 2 the saints are viewed as "quickened with the Christ (ye are saved by grace), and has raised us up together, and has made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, that he might display in the coming ages the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.

For ye are saved by grace, through faith; and this not of yourselves; it is God's gift: not on the principle of works, that no one might boast" (Ephesians 2: 5 - 9). Have we considered what it means to be "saved by grace" according to Ephesians 2? It means that we have an entirely new place with God, and that the place of Christ as a glorified Man in heaven. How many of us understand that heaven is our present place? Not merely that we shall be there when we die, or when the Lord comes. But that God's salvation by grace has made it our place now, has secured for us at this present time the place of the risen and glorified Man — the anointed Head. Is not that infinitely better and greater than the best place — the best religious place even — that we could have on earth?

God would have us to know the character of approach to Himself which is secured by the Bullock of the Sin-offering. It is a larger apprehension of Christ than the Scape-goat, or the Goat for Jehovah. These will be known by Israel, but the Bullock is for the assembly. We ought to covet to have the largest possible thought of Christ, and of what He has secured for us. Every one who has the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Spirit is of the assembly, and God would encourage each one to say in his heart, I belong to the heavenly company. There is sometimes a feeling with believers that it would be presumption to take such high ground. But has the great love of God given us that place? If so, His pleasure must be that we should know and enjoy it. It has nothing to do with any worthiness or merit of ours. It is a question of the love of God, the value of the Sin-offering, and the preciousness of Christ to God. One might add, also, the riches of His mercy to us.

The blessing of Israel — the earthly company — is on the ground of Christ as typified by the two goats for a sin-offering, and the ram for a burnt-offering. One goat is for Jehovah, to glorify Him in the highest, for its blood is carried in and sprinkled upon and before the mercy-seat. The other bears away "to a land apart from men" the iniquities, transgressions and sins of the people. In the one we have what meets the glory of God and makes propitiation; in the other we see substitution — the actual bearing of sins. The sins are taken clean away, never to return. "I will pardon their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more" (Jeremiah 31: 34).

We have to go through the exercises of the day of atonement, and to learn its lessons, and Israel will have to take up those exercises in a coming day. It is not only that they have broken the law, and turned to idolatry, but they have persecuted and slain the prophets, and have become the deliverers up and murderers of their promised Messiah. Blood-guiltiness attaches to them in the most awful way. Zechariah describes what they will go through when they

realize this. "They shall look on me whom they pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for an only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem ... and the land shall mourn, every family apart: the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart; and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart" (Zechariah 12: 10 - 14).

What a day will that be for them when they look at their whole history in the light of the fact that they have slain their Messiah! Whatever glory has been found amongst them in the ways of God — kingly, prophetic, priestly or levitical — has to come down into the dust of self-abasement and mourning. "Ye shall afflict your souls: it is an everlasting statute" (Leviticus 16: 31). There is no exemption from the obligation of this, but, thank God! "a sabbath of rest shall it be unto you". They will learn then to confess their iniquities "and all their transgressions in all their sins" over the head of the Blessed One whom they refused and killed, but who became in grace their Sin-offering.

"Dark deed! it was thine to afflict Him,
Yet longs His soul for the day
When thou in the blood of thy Victim
Shalt wash thy deep stains away!"

They will learn that all their guilt has been borne by Him. They will exclaim with wonder, in words which have been prepared for them beforehand by the prophetic Spirit, "Surely *he* hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; and we, we did regard him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all For the transgression of my people was he stricken ... he had done no violence, neither was there guile in his mouth. Yet it pleased Jehovah to bruise him; he hath subjected him to suffering. When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see a seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand *He* shall bear their iniquities ... He hath poured out his soul unto death, and was reckoned with the transgressors; and he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isaiah 53). All this expresses most touchingly what was true of Christ as typified on the day of atonement by the goat that was sent away. And as the people enter into it,

and rest in the value of Christ as the sin-offering they will find "a sabbath of rest". And this is all true today for any guilt-oppressed soul that believes in Jesus.

Then in Leviticus 16: 24, Aaron, having put off the linen garments and resumed the normal priestly garments, goes back to the brazen altar and offers his burnt-offering, and the burnt-offering of the people. The burnt-offering would seem, from its use in Scripture generally, to have in view an acceptance and divine favour in which God's people stand as having a place before Him on earth. The first burnt-offering was Noah's (Genesis 8: 20); it secured God's favour for the earth. The second was Isaac (Genesis 22), and on the ground of it Abraham would be richly blessed, and his seed multiplied. He would have seed for heavenly blessing as well as earthly; "the stars of heaven" setting forth the former, and "the sand that is on the seashore" the latter. And in his Seed should "all the nations of the earth bless themselves". Then in Exodus 18 "Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt-offering and sacrifices for God". This was typically the Gentile taking his place with God in the sweet savour of the burnt-offering — apprehending Christ in his personal and sacrificial acceptability to God as the ground of blessing.

God has had a Man — His own beloved Son — on earth to do His will, and to be perfect in devotedness to Him under every conceivable test, even as bearing sin. The sweet odour of that has gone up from the earth, and is a ground of acceptance for men viewed as on earth. We come into it as persons justified by faith, who now have access through Christ into God's favour in which we stand (Romans 5: 2). Believers today stand in divine favour according to the acceptableness of Christ. We are the children of God down here, the subjects of His Fatherly care and love, His household; and we are sons in freedom in the very place where we were once slaves in bondage. See Galatians 4: 6, 7; Romans 8: 15. Hence we are to be "imitators of God, as beloved children, and walk in love, even as the Christ loved us, and delivered himself up for us, an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour" (Ephesians 5: 1, 2). This is not what we are "inside the veil", but what we are as occupying, for the time, a place on earth as in divine favour. We are provisionally in the place where Israel was, and will be, but we are there in divine favour, and as knowing the love of God and of Christ. We do not learn that favour by circumstances or providences, but by knowing that we are with God on the footing of Christ, and His death in burnt-offering character. We perceive love that way, and as we know it we "walk in love".

Millennial Israel will be on earth in the favour of God on the ground of the Burnt-offering. Their circumstances will be happy, for there will be "neither

adversary nor evil event"; they will have "rest on every side"; but even then they will measure the favour of God, not by the happy surroundings, but by Christ. They will say when they come to Zion, "Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed" (Psalm 84: 9). "Men shall bless themselves in him; all nations shall call him blessed" (Psalm 72: 17). We, today, have not millennial circumstances. Sin and sorrow are all around us. Sufferings mark "this present time". But we stand in favour on account of Christ, and because of the sweet odour of the Burnt-offering.

The bullock of the sin-offering and the goat of the sin-offering were to be burned with fire outside the camp (Leviticus 16: 27). This is what is referred to in Hebrews 13: 11, 12. "Of those beasts whose blood is carried as sacrifices for sin into the holy of holies by the high priest, of these the bodies are burned outside the camp. Wherefore also Jesus, that he might sanctify the people by his own blood, suffered without the gate". The burning of the bodies of those beasts speaks of the all-consuming judgment with which sin has been visited. The One who knew no sin has been made sin for us, and He has borne the judgment that was due to sin. God would teach us by this holy type that there was something more involved in atonement than suffering at the hands of men — something additional even to the penalty of death. There is the action of the fire. All that God is as against sin, expressed in a holy judgment that would utterly consume it when presented before Him sacrificially, is seen in this solemn type. Christ as the sin-offering has endured it fully. The judgment of God — so far as believers are concerned — has been entirely and eternally exhausted.

Romans 8: 3 is peculiarly touching. "God having sent *his own Son*, in likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh". It was "*His own Son*" who was sent into the place of sin's condemnation. The utter destruction of the world and all its inhabitants would not have been such a solemn and impressive testimony as that. For it was the righteous and holy One who was forsaken, and who bore the judgment. God has condemned sin in the flesh in the most solemn and public way. Now the order of man which dishonoured Him — the man characterized by sin — is no longer before Him. Another Man is before God, who has glorified Him in bearing sin's condemnation, and every creature under heaven can be blessed through that Man.

But the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews connects momentous present consequences with the blood being carried within the holiest and the bodies burned outside the camp. He introduces the subject by saying, "We have an altar of which they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle". It seems to me that what is in the mind of the Spirit here is the whole system of heavenly

grace which is our part on the ground of the Sin-offering. He would have our hearts confirmed with it. I have connected it in my mind with the "altar of wood" in Ezekiel 41: 22, which is said to be "the table which is before Jehovah". The fact that it is of wood precludes the idea of it being a fire-altar, either for sacrifice or for incense. It is a food-altar — a table to feed from. It is the only thing mentioned which seems to be within the house, and there is no intimation of any service being rendered at that altar, or of the priests eating from it. They "minister in the gates of the inner court, and *towards* the house", but it is not said that they enter. It is true that there are doors with turning leaves, which suggest abundant entrance, but there is nothing to show that Israel, or the earthly priesthood — "the sons of Zadok" — will enter therein. The fact that "the glory of Jehovah filled the house" would rather preclude the thought of this. The doors with turning leaves, and the "altar of wood" within, might be a witness to Israel that there was another family with the privilege of abundant entrance to a nearer place than theirs, and that that family would have a food-altar connected with what was *within*.

But whether this is so or not, we have clearly a food-altar in Hebrews 13: 10 of which it is said, "they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle". It is a source of food supply for the hearts of God's people which is connected with the blood of the sin-offering being carried into the holy of holies, and the bodies being burned outside the camp. God would have our hearts nourished upon what stands connected with that. And that for us brings in the confirming power of all that is now to be known through Christ having been the sin-offering, and having now passed through the heavens and entered within the veil as Forerunner for us. The truth of the heavenly calling, and all that is bound up with it, would be the food of that altar.

There are no sins where Jesus is — "within the veil"; He has "made by himself the purification of sins". Man in the flesh is not there; he has been sacrificially ended in the death of Christ.

"Glory supreme is there,
Glory that shines through all".

But there is a company sanctified by the blood of the Sin-offering, and having the witness of the Spirit to the value of that offering, for whom there is abundant entrance through infinite grace.

"'Tis Jesus fills that holy place
Where glory dwells, and thy deep love

In its own fulness (known through grace)
Rests where He lives, in heaven above".

The altar of which we have a right to eat is the christian altar, as contrasted with what is earthly and Jewish. It is an altar which stands in relation to "the better and more perfect tabernacle not made with hand (that is, not of this creation)". It is connected with "the heavenly things themselves". It is "the table which is before Jehovah"; or rather, as we must say now in the light of full revelation, which is before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The epistle to the Hebrews does not develop all that goes to make up the system of "heavenly things", but it would prepare those who read it for the epistle to the Ephesians which gives the full light and blessedness of the heavenly.

We have a Food-altar: are we eating of it? Are we being nourished on the grace which has given us a place and portion within the veil with a heavenly Christ? Our approach to God will be practically according to the measure in which our hearts are confirmed with that grace. We should consider much what is before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Is it not that He "has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ; according as he has chosen us in him before the world's foundation, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love; having marked us out beforehand for sonship through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has taken us into favour in the Beloved: in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of offences, according to the riches of his grace"? All the grace of that is ministered to us for the confirmation of our hearts. We have access to the Father in the light and strength of it.

Now can you find anything to correspond with that in the organized systems of christendom which give man in the flesh a place? Can you, in the light of your place *within*, remain in "the camp"? If the blood of the Sin-offering has gone within it has secured for those whom it has sanctified a place and privilege that are wholly apart from the man after the flesh, and from everything that could have a religious place on earth — even Judaism, so long divinely sanctioned. Is it that Judaism was not of God? By no means. *But the man who had religious privileges on earth in Judaism was under death.* Ah! the "Place of a skull" tells its own solemn tale! What of a city, be it ever so holy as a divinely-appointed religious centre on earth, if all in it are under death? What of ordinances, services, ceremonies, sacraments, if the "Place of a skull" is man's place, and the end of his religion as well as of his sins? If Jesus has suffered without the gate of the holy city, where does it put His "companions"

as to everything that has religious status in connection with man after the flesh?

God acted with patience and forbearance. He gave space for repentance to the house of Israel in the early chapters of the Acts, and there was a transitional period which continued some years. But when the epistle to the Hebrews was written there was a definite call to "go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach". Judaism, and all that was connected with it, was to be left, for Jesus was outside it. He had suffered without the gate, and His blood had gone within the veil. The system of things which recognized man in the flesh was no longer to hold the people of God, for Jesus had died and borne the judgment of that man in order to remove him sacrificially, and to set up everything for the pleasure of God in Himself as risen and in heaven, and to set apart a people to be in the light and blessing of it; but, as a necessary consequence, to be "without the camp, bearing his reproach".

We can see the application of this to "the camp" of Judaism, but it is impossible to forget that the religious world today largely takes character from Judaism. It recognizes the man after the flesh; it has set up and maintains an order of things in which he can participate. It will not own in any practical sense that all that is due to that man is the "Place of a skull" and the consuming judgment of God. So that those who do own this in their souls, and who recognize that they have a place within in association with a heavenly Christ, must needs be found in a path of separation. We cannot go outside the Christian profession, as the believing Jew was called to leave Judaism altogether, so that the analogy between their circumstances and ours is not complete. But the path to which they were divinely called affords instruction as to the separation in which God would have His people to walk in the midst of the corruption and departure of Christendom. We are to "withdraw from iniquity", to purify ourselves from vessels to dishonour in separating from them, and we are to "pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2: 19 - 22). We are called to a separate path *within* the christian profession, as those who have the light of the heavenly calling, and who see that the man after the flesh has no place with God. Such a path involves bearing the reproach of Christ.

LEVITICUS 17

Leviticus 17

The first part of this chapter relates to the fellowship of God's people. In considering chapter 16 we have seen the blessed character of *our approach* to God according to the value of the Sin-offering of the day of atonement, and according to Christ as the One who has gone within the veil. But peace-offerings relate to the fellowship in which we walk with others in the place where Christ died. And the truth of fellowship involves the whole question of what our enjoyments consist in, and where we find them. God loves His people too well to bear that they should have enjoyments apart from Him.

The elder brother in Luke 15 did not care for the merriment and rejoicing which were going on in the father's house; he had no communion with his father's delights; he had a fellowship of his own. "To me hast thou never given a kid that I might make merry *with my friends*". It was "I" and "my friends" without his father; he "would not go in" to take part in the communion of infinite grace. His fellowship was really an idolatrous one, for it was as much apart from his father as were the self-gratifications of the younger son in the far country.

It is against such selfish and idolatrous enjoyments that this chapter warns us. Every ox, or sheep, or goat slaughtered was to be brought to Jehovah, to the entrance of the tent of meeting, and sacrificed as a peace-offering to Jehovah. "And they shall no more sacrifice their sacrifices unto demons, after whom they go a whoring". Any enjoyments that cannot be taken up with God, and shared with His people as in relation to Him at the altar, may be suspected as likely to open the door to what is idolatrous.

"Neither be ye idolaters, as some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play" (1 Corinthians 10: 7). They gratified themselves in the absence of Moses, and without God. To do so is to forget that Christ has died here, and that He is absent as rejected by the world. In introducing the subject of fellowship the Apostle says, "Wherefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to intelligent persons: do ye judge what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of the Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of the Christ?" And in contrast with this he says "that what the nations sacrifice they sacrifice to demons, and not to God. Now I do not wish you to be in communion with demons. Ye cannot drink the Lord's cup, and the cup of demons: ye cannot partake of the Lord's table, and of the table of demons" (1 Corinthians 10: 14 - 22).

In a professedly christian country we have not idols of wood or stone, but there are a thousand things which practically rob God of His place in the hearts of His people. Things which have no connection with His altar, and no place in the spiritual fellowship to which He has called His people. All worldly amusements have this character, and much that is connected with worldly religion is really idolatrous, because it tends to please and satisfy men at a distance from God.

For a man to kill his ox, sheep, or goat without bringing it to the tent of meeting simply meant that he was going to have a feast in which God had no part. "That man shall be cut off from among his people". He had morally cut himself off by making provision to enjoy himself without God. There was no sacrificial character about an animal slaughtered apart from the altar: it did not speak of Christ at all; it only represented a using of what God had given providentially for self-gratification. This is exactly what the world does, and it is in principle idolatrous. God loves His people, and would have all their happiness connected with Himself. He would have each one of His people to say truthfully, "My God, the spring of all my joys".

Peace-offerings connected with the altar and the tent of meeting can be participated in by all the people of God that are "clean". Everything that truly belongs to the fellowship — all that is of Christ; and that comes to us through His death, and the holy love of God revealed to us through death — can be shared by all who love God. If I have a source of gratification which is not the common portion of all saints I might well ask, What is its character? What we can enjoy in common lies entirely outside the world; it is the fellowship of the body and blood of Christ; and this puts our enjoyments really on the resurrection side of death. We may enjoy together feeding upon Christ, with the happy consciousness that what we enjoy is the common portion of all who love God, and that we enjoy it as near to God, and in communion with His altar.

"The tent of meeting" was the rallying point for the whole congregation. It would remind us of our relations with all the brethren. We stand committed to a holy partnership, and we have all to be true to it. Should I like to know that all saints were doing what I am doing? If not, can it be right for me to do it? If I do what is not according to the truth of Christian fellowship, I misrepresent all the brethren, as well as failing to maintain what is due to the Lord. Each partner is to be a true representative of all the others. Everything that we do either ministers to the support of the fellowship or weakens it. A young believer just starting on a two-years' cruise in a large vessel, lay in his hammock the first night out from Portsmouth, praying about the two years

during which he might perhaps hardly have any Christian fellowship, and the thought came to him, Here you are with all these men, and you do not know that there is one believer amongst them to report what you say or do, and yet the way you conduct yourself during these two years will affect for strengthening or weakening the whole company of saints on earth! It is good to remember that each partner in the fellowship represents all the partners. Sometimes a believer may think he is of no account, and it does not matter what he does, or where he goes, or how he spends his time! But each believer is one of the partners in the fellowship, and what he does is either true to the fellowship or is a misrepresentation of it. I heard the other day of a brother being seen at a football match! What kind of witness was that?

In the wilderness position it is important to maintain what is due to the Lord, and what is consistent with the fellowship to which we are called. So that it is a continual exercise not to take up anything for enjoyment that we do not hold in communion with God, and with those who love Him. But "in the land", as Deuteronomy 12 tells us, "according to all the desire of thy soul thou mayest slay and eat flesh in all thy gates, according to the blessing of Jehovah thy God which he hath given thee" (verse 15). Your "gates" are on divine territory now, and your border has been enlarged there (verse 20), and every trace of idolatry extirpated (verses 2, 3). You are in "the rest" and "the inheritance" (verse 9), you love all saints, and you have "gates" in which you can enjoy what your soul desires. The burnt-offerings and the hallowed things are all still connected with the place where Jehovah sets His Name, but what the soul desires can be enjoyed in "all thy gates". This is not "in the camp" or "out of the camp", but souls established, in type, on divine territory. They are wonderful "gates" when you consider what is cherished and nourished there — the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, the widow. See Deuteronomy 14: 29. When you have "gates" like that you can be trusted. They are the "gates" of a people who are in the affections of sons, and who enjoy a God-given inheritance in a spirit of grace towards those who are dependent. They have "bowels of compassions" — the first feature of the elect of God in Colossians 3. "The desire of thy soul" in Deuteronomy 12 is typically the desire of the new man, and the "gates" are only open to receive the blessing of Jehovah (verse 15), and to administer that blessing in a spirit of grace to others. To enjoy such a portion all the year round is a wonderful preparation for going up to "the place which Jehovah your God will choose ... to set his name there".

The difference between Leviticus 17 and Deuteronomy 12 brings out the difference between saints viewed as being true to the fellowship in the wilderness, and viewed as enjoying the inheritance in the land. In one position constant watchfulness against the intrusion of what is idolatrous is called for.

In the other what is typified is the enjoyment in rest and liberty of divine favour and goodness on divine territory where all is received from God and used for God. What was killed in those "gates" was not for self-gratification, but in the enjoyment of what was God-given, and to minister to others in the spirit of grace. It was there the enjoyment of the inheritance.

Leviticus 17: 10 - 14 renews the commandment against eating blood, which had been first given to Noah (Genesis 9: 4), and repeated in Leviticus 3: 17; Leviticus 7: 26, but now the reason is given. "I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul. *Therefore* have I said unto the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood". The lessons of the blood were so distinctive, and so vital to all their relations with God, that He would not allow any use of blood which might enfeeble them. Blood was always to be connected in their thoughts with atonement.

It has pleased God that man should be in a condition on earth in which "the soul (or life) of the flesh is in the blood". If man's blood is shed his life is taken. In the wisdom of God this is also true of the animals, that they might be suitable to represent man sacrificially, though they have no spirit that stands morally in relation to God — as man has. Man as in flesh, having his life in the blood, has fallen, and come under the penalty of death. If man is to have righteousness with God, or life, or blessing, it must be on the ground of the death of Another. The "coats of skin" (Genesis 3: 21) were the first lesson as to this, disclosing the wondrous thought of God that man, the fallen and naked sinner, might be clothed with a divine righteousness through death. Every animal that is killed for man's benefit speaks of Christ, for it is given by God (Genesis 9: 3) to suggest to man that he may benefit through death.

Then every life that was taken sacrificially emphasized the lesson. The blood was given upon the altar to make atonement. Every animal that is killed for food speaks of man as being sustained through the death of Another. Every animal killed in sacrifice spoke of man being in relation with God through the death of Another. Both remind man that his own life in flesh is forfeited, and that he may enjoy good through a life being taken over which he had not the slightest claim. God originated that life, and alone had rights in regard to it, and if in goodness and mercy He permits the creature whose life in flesh is forfeited to benefit by another creature life being taken, His rights must be owned. He reserves the blood. It is as obligatory upon christians to abstain from eating blood as it was upon the children of Israel. See Acts 15: 29. It is a question of the permanent rights of God over His creatures on earth.

But this statement that "the life of the flesh is in the blood" can hardly be considered without our hearts being reminded of the wondrous fact that there has been One in that condition whose life was *not* forfeited. The blessed Son of God took part in blood and flesh. See Hebrews 2: 14 and the note in the New Translation. He came into that condition absolutely without taint of sin; He "knew no sin"; He was the Holy One of God. But He took part in that condition of flesh and blood in which man had been created and had fallen and become sinful and subject to death. In that condition of flesh and blood sin attached *to us*; our lives were forfeited; we were under the penalty of death. In that condition of flesh and blood sin did not attach to *Him*, and therefore *His* life was not forfeited; death had no claim on Him whatever. But He came into that condition where "the life of the flesh is in the blood" in view of the accomplishment of atonement. He took part in blood and flesh that His blood might be poured out, and the life ended sacrificially that was forfeited by the just judgment of God upon sin. His blood was given upon the altar to make atonement. The very condition to which, in us, sin attached was brought to an end in the vicarious death of that sinless One. He never resumed the life in blood and flesh. He was raised having "flesh and bones" (Luke 24: 39) but having poured out His blood for atonement. He has laid down the life which was in the blood, and He lives eternally now in resurrection life and a spiritual and glorified body. The same Blessed Man, unchanged in all that He was morally, but in a new and eternal condition to which sin can never attach, and in which He dies no more.

"It is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul". We know how the adversaries of our faith deride the thought of this. They regard it as offensive, and only suited to an unenlightened age. But man is a sinner, and under death. No doubt the thought of this is offensive also. If we set aside the thought of atoning blood we have not got rid of all that is offensive! But, thank God! the precious fact remains that the blood speaks of what meets in divine grace the actual and undeniable facts of the situation. It goes to the very root of the tremendous questions which all men have to face. Men may be, as Peter says, "willingly" ignorant. They may resolutely shut their eyes to the fact that man is fallen and under death. They may dream out schemes of morality and philosophy, indifferent to the fact that they are useless as a remedy for man's condition. They may even profess to accept the moral teachings of the Bible while refusing its doctrine of atonement. But the fact remains that man is sinful; his life is forfeited; he cannot put himself right. It is the voice of a Saviour God that says, "The life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul". Man's life in flesh is forfeited; he is under the

penalty of death. Whatever his views he cannot get away from this, offensive as the thought may be. But if infinite love has considered the situation, and a Sinless One — a Divine Person — has come into flesh and blood that an unforfeited life of infinite value might be given in the way of atonement, what a revelation it is of what God is!

Man's life in flesh is in the blood; if you shed his blood his life is gone. But man in that life is fallen; he is a sinner under death. Is man content to leave it at that? If so, he must be prepared to abide the consequences. But if man is content to leave it so, God is not. He has sent His blessed Son in holy Manhood to take part in blood and flesh that His blood might be given for atonement. It is in this way that we know the love and righteousness of a Saviour God.

Blood speaks of life poured out. Man is ever to respect that; it is never to be a common thing to him, or a thing he can use as he likes. Every life taken for man's benefit speaks of Christ and of atonement. The principle of vegetarianism is contrary to Scripture; the real root of it is the enemy's hatred of the idea that man is to benefit through death. But it is only death that can make atonement or secure blessing for sinful men.

LEVITICUS 18 TO 20

Leviticus 18 - Leviticus 20

These chapters correspond with what is spoken of in the New Testament as the putting off the old man with his deeds, and putting on the new man. A former order of things is contemplated. "After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do; and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do; neither shall ye walk in their customs". "All these abominations have the men of the land done, who were before you, and the land hath been made unclean" (chapters 18: 3, 27; 20: 23). All connected with that former order is to be absolutely refused. It is positively evil and abominable, and divine authority is brought to bear upon it. Moses is the speaker; Aaron does not appear.

All the features of the old man appear in these chapters — corruption in the gratification of lust, cruelty in giving their seed unto Molech, and falsehood. The old man is morally after the devil. It "corrupts itself according to the deceitful lusts" (Ephesians 4: 22). We must distinguish between the old man and the natural man. There are things in the natural man which are of God — natural affection, kindness, and often a great measure of truth and uprightness in dealing with his fellows. These things serve to show that in natural — that is, unconverted — men and women there are features which are of God. Paul speaks of some who "practise by nature the things of the law" (Romans 2: 14). The rich young man who came to the Lord was a natural man, but there were features in him which the Lord could value, and which drew out the Lord's love. It is right to recognize even in unconverted people what is good and of God. It is to be respected, for it is a trace left of God's handiwork. Just as in a ruined building you may see bits that show the handiwork of the builder.

But the old man is marked by corruption, cruelty, and falsehood. It sets forth what man is as corrupted by Satan, and corrupting himself; there is not a single feature in the old man that is of God. The heart of man as fallen is the source of every corrupt and cruel thing (Mark 7: 21). There may be a certain veneer on the outside, particularly where Christian light is, but within is "all uncleanness" (Matthew 23: 27). The old man is not an individual any more than the new man is. These terms "the old man" and "the new man" are used to designate two totally different orders of moral being. The whole mass of fallen humanity carries the features of "the old man", though those features come out more distinctly in some than others. The saints — "the holy and faithful brethren in Christ" — have "put off the old man with his deeds", and

have put on the new. The new man "according to God is created in truthful righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4: 24), and is "renewed into full knowledge according to the image of him that has created him" (Colossians 3: 10). That image is seen in Christ. So that the new man is according to God as set forth in Christ. "I am Jehovah your God" necessitates moral correspondence between God and His people. And it is striking that believers are not told to put off the old man and to put on the new. It is supposed that every one who has learned the Christ has done it.

The new man is a divine creation. What the old man is can be seen on all sides. It is written large on the history of the world, and in the pages of every newspaper! But, thank God! there is a new man — a divine creation more wonderful than the material universe — a man created "in truthful righteousness and holiness", and according to God as imaged in Christ. A man who is not only "created" but "renewed", so that his moral features are preserved in distinctiveness and freshness. The features of the new man do not deteriorate or decay. They are not one hair's-breadth nearer to the features of the old man than they were at the outset of christianity.

The new man does not go on with "the doings of the land of Egypt" or "the doings of the land of Canaan". It seems to me that the Egyptian element is prominent in Colossians — "philosophy and vain deceit, according to the teaching of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ" (Colossians 2: 8). But I think the Canaanitish element would appear in Ephesians. "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye should no longer walk as the rest of the nations walk in the vanity of their mind, being darkened in understanding,

estranged from the life of God by reason of the ignorance which is in them, by reason of the hardness of their hearts, who having cast off all feeling, have given themselves up to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greedy unsatisfied lust" (Ephesians 4: 17 - 19).

It may be added that the new man comes into evidence on earth. "The new man" could have no meaning in heaven, for there has never been an "old man" there. In the place where diabolical corruption appears in the old man the new man comes out as a divine creation. And indeed many of the features of the new man will not be called for in heaven. For example, bowels of compassion, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another! These are for earth, not heaven.

It is through the affections that God brings us to put off the old man and to put on the new. He brings Christ into the view of our souls as the Anointed Man of His pleasure. Colossians speaks of receiving the Christ; Ephesians

speaks of learning the Christ. The brethren in Christ "have heard him and been instructed in him according as the truth is in Jesus" (Ephesians 4: 21). This shows that believers come under the direct and personal influence of Christ; and all who have really experienced this have put off the old man and have put on the new.

Chapter 19 stands by itself as the only chapter in this book whose contents are addressed to "all the assembly of the children of Israel". It is the people looked at as forming a moral whole — one might say, in figure, "one new man" — observing in unity all God's statutes and ordinances. God has His new man down here where the Jew and Gentile were. He has wrought in creative power to bring that new man into being, and it takes "all the assembly" to give expression to him. This chapter is a comprehensive summary of what is to mark those who reverence God's sanctuary. There is something more in it than individual obedience, for each one is to be concerned that his neighbour also is kept right. One is to be as anxious for one's neighbour to be free from any evil as one is about oneself (verses 17, 18). We belong to a holy assembly, for it is God's assembly and He is holy, and each one is responsible to maintain the holy character of His assembly.

Much that is written here is almost transcribed into Colossians and Ephesians. "Ye shall reverence every man his mother, and his father". "Ye shall not steal". "Ye shall not lie one to another". "Thou shalt not avenge thyself, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people". Compare Ephesians 6:2; Ephesians 4:25; Ephesians 4:28; Ephesians 4:31,32.

If "all the assembly" is to be holy because God is holy, every mother and father in that assembly would be marked by holiness, and the influence which they brought to bear in their households would be a divine and godly influence. The children not provoked to anger, but brought up in the discipline and admonition of the Lord. It is very suitable that we should "reverence" those who have cared for us in childhood and youth, and preserved us from the corrupting influences of the world, and who have sought our good in relation to God. The older we get the more we "reverence" those who in the place of parents have protected us, and brought divine influences and control to bear upon us. Indeed it is to be noted that it is "every man" — not every child — who is to reverence his mother and father. As long as the parents live they are to be revered. Many a wayward boy and girl has longed to be free from parental care and control, but the grace of God would bring salvation to such, and teach them to value the immense privilege of a christian household. On the other hand it is an abiding exercise for believing parents to maintain that, before their children, which is truly deserving of reverence.

I have no doubt there is a parental influence in the assembly which God would have us to reverence. There is maternal cherishing and fatherly admonition (1 Thessalonians 2: 7, 11).

"My sabbaths shall ye keep" refers to the other positive injunction of the law. God's people are to own *His* sabbaths. Jehovah rested on the seventh day, and blessed and hallowed it. He said, as it were, I have hallowed my sabbaths, now you are to hallow them. It tested the people's state of heart as to whether they valued communion with their God. Do you love to think of how perfectly God has secured rest for Himself in Christ?

The "sacrifice of peace-offering" refers to the fellowship of saints being such as can be accepted. It must not be eaten beyond the second day. Spiritual joys have to be sustained by renewed direct communion with God. We have spoken of the principle of renewing in connection with the new man, and the necessity for renewing is emphasized in the peace offering. It is not sufficient to be conscious that one has not done anything wrong. There must be a *renewal* with God and with His people of that which is the source and spring of spiritual joy. Many live on the remembrance of joys they have had, but that is not an acceptable ground of communion in the present. We often, perhaps, speak together of things when the heart has no longer a present and deep sense of what they mean as in nearness to God about them. At such a time renewing is needed. We should be exercised that the character of our communion is such that God can be complacent in it at the moment. Every saint who has the Spirit has known spiritual joy in Christ. Many know it was real, and live on the memory of it. People who tell us that things were better, and in more power, years ago are confessing that what they cherish as a remembrance is greater to them than what they are in the enjoyment of now! It is time they brought another peace-offering, and got all renewed with God and with the brethren! One feels the need for renewing very much. It is easy to sing beautiful hymns, and to utter beautiful words, without the affections moving vitally with what we sing or say. We need renewal of spiritual joy and energy. We may know a thing to be true without having the present joy of it with God or with our brethren. How thankful we ought to be that there is such a thing as renewing!

Then in the harvest and the vintage, when the rich fruits of divine goodness are being gathered, "the poor and the stranger" are to be thought of (verses 9, 10). God would never have us to forget that there are "poor" amongst His people — those who are not in possession of fields or vineyards. If we have spiritual substance let us consider them, and try to make some of it available for them. There are tens of thousands of God's Israel who are "poor". We

cannot make them come and glean, but we ought to think of them, and have them in our hearts. We can see, at any rate, that gleanings are there for them if they have any desire. Such consideration is "after God"; if He sees it in our hearts He sees the features of the new man.

Then the "stranger" — one entirely outside God's people — is to be thought of also. Boaz carried this out to the stranger Ruth. How thankful should we be to see more Ruths in the fields of Boaz! There are rich gleanings there, and the gleaners can have not only the gleanings, but Boaz himself — the mighty Man in whom all divine wealth is found! The "poor" would thus become rich indeed!

The following statutes (verses 11 - 18) bring out in various ways the character that God would impress upon His people by bringing Himself before them as known in grace. Then mixtures are to be avoided (verse 19). Satan often works on this line — putting together two things which should be kept apart, and really spoiling both. We are warned not to be carried away by "various and strange doctrines". I think all such are marked by mixture — part law, part grace, part human philosophy! How often there are two sorts of seeds in what professes to be gospel preaching! And in result people appear in garments "woven of two materials"! A bit of Christ and a good deal of self!

Ten times in these three chapters God says, "I am Jehovah your God". Twelve times He says, "I am Jehovah". He would impress upon His people that their conduct and spirit is to take character from Him. The new man is "according to God ... created in truthful righteousness and holiness". He says, "Ye shall be holy unto me; for I Jehovah am holy, and have separated you from the peoples to be mine" (chapter 20: 26). God would have His people to be entirely diverse from all other peoples. Moses prayed to Jehovah to go with His people, "so shall we be distinguished, I and thy people, from every people that is on the face of the earth" (Exodus 33: 16). If God goes with His people it must be to discipline them, and bring them into accord with Himself, so that they may be for His pleasure.

LEVITICUS 21

Leviticus 21

This chapter brings before us the holiness proper to "the priests, the sons of Aaron". The nearer one comes to God, the more essential it is to maintain holiness. A degree of separation that might suffice for the congregation would not be suitable for the priests. There has to be greater care as to natural influences, though they are not wholly excluded save in the case of "the priest who is greater than his brethren". He is not to uncover his head, nor rend his garments, nor make himself unclean even for his father or mother. But the priest in general might "make himself unclean" for "his immediate relation, who is near unto him".

This suggests that in priests natural feelings are to be under restraint, and there must be exercise as to how far they allow themselves to be affected thereby. There is that which is legitimate, but the priest has to consider how far what is natural has a claim according to God. "They shall be holy unto their God ... for they present Jehovah's offerings by fire, the bread of their God; therefore shall they be holy" (verse 6).

The fat of the peace-offering is called "the bread of the offering by fire to Jehovah" (Leviticus 3: 11, 16). The priest is one who ministers to the satisfaction of God in bringing Christ before Him, and therefore it is not fitting that he should be affected by natural feelings without exercise as to what is comely. He must ever remember that he is a priest, and that he is called to minister to God that which God can feed upon, and his natural feelings have to be controlled in view of that. When it was a question of the service of God the Lord said to His mother, "What have I to do with thee, woman? mine hour has not yet come" (John 2: 4). He did not own the natural in His service. His mother and His brethren were those who did the will of God.

Then the priest was to keep his affections from going out to that which had a moral stain upon it — that which was marked by unfaithfulness or impurity (verse 7). There are many things in the christian profession which bear the mark of unfaithfulness. We must recognize that it is unsuitable for priests to come into association with them. It is a question here of the moral dignity of those who minister to God. It would be well if God's called ones looked at themselves more in the light of verse 8. All saints have the privilege of taking up priesthood, but how far we have taken it up spiritually is another matter. God would encourage us to do so.

There is a further thought in verses 10 - 15. We come here to "the priest who is greater than his brethren". This is a type of Christ — the anointed and consecrated One — who never leaves the sanctuary; who is apart from all natural influences; but who gets a companion of virgin character in the faithful remnant of His people, or — at the present time — in the assembly.

But whether we think of "the anointing oil" poured on His head, or "the garments" of His consecration, how blessedly are His saints identified with Him! If He is "the priest who is greater than his brethren", that very designation shows that He has brethren. And His brethren share in the anointing; they have a memorial in the breast-plate, the shoulder-pieces, and the hem of the cloak. It is impossible to detach the saints from Christ in heaven, or He from them. The Sanctifier and the sanctified are "all of one". Our earthly links are broken by the death of Christ here, and heavenly ones are formed by the anointing that links us with Him where He is.

Now we have to see that we are identified with the "virgin" character — not with that which speaks of unfaithfulness, or of affections that have had another object. No other but Christ was ever entitled to the assembly. The Spirit's work is to produce holy affections in the assembly — affections that never had, and never could have, any other object but Christ. We have to see to it that such affections are maintained in freshness and fervour. The serpent would do his utmost to beguile us by his craft, so that our "thoughts should be corrupted from simplicity as to the Christ" (2 Corinthians 11: 3). We are to be presented "a chaste virgin to Christ".

People talk of "revivals" here and there, but in truth we are in the time of the greatest revival there ever was. The Spirit of God is reviving virgin character and bridal affections in the assembly under the eye, and for the heart, of the One who values that character and those affections. Does not the thought of it move us to desire and pray that we may be in the gain of what the Spirit is saying to the assemblies today? The "virgin" character is in contrast to Thyatira, which develops into Babylon, the great harlot, who corrupts herself with all that is great and grand in the world. And bridal affection would come in as a bright and blessed contrast to the indifference of Laodicea. All saints are called to have "chaste virgin" character. Every corrupting influence is exposed in Scripture, and particularly in the epistles to the seven assemblies, that we may turn from those influences with aversion, and allow our hearts to unfold "as the rose to the golden sun" to the One who is coming.

Then none of Aaron's seed with a "defect" was to "approach to present the bread of his God" (verse 17). Note that it is Aaron's "seed" here, not his "sons". This is only found in this section of the book. The "seed" seems to

suggest those born again — of new generation morally — but not necessarily “perfect in Christ”. Aaron’s “sons” would speak of their dignity as consecrated. To use the language of the New Testament the “sons” have received the ministry of reconciliation, but the “seed” may not have. There are many of divine “seed” in the world who do not stand consciously in the good of the gospel; they are not yet in the freedom and spiritual dignity of “sons”. They cannot approach to offer as priests either unto the veil or the altar.

Now for such it is important to know that God is announcing in this world a Person in whom there never was, nor could be, any “defect”. Speaking of Christ, Paul says, “Whom we announce”. Christ is announced that He may be received, and that souls may know that they can be with God entirely on the ground of Another Man in whom there never was any defect. So Paul announced Christ, and laboured that he might “present every man perfect in Christ” (Colossians 1: 28). “The reconciliation” is something to be received, for it is written, “Our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom now we have received the reconciliation” (Romans 5: 11). Through the death of His Son we can be with God on the footing of One in whom there was never any blemish.

A “defect” is not necessarily a man’s own fault; it might be the result of bad teaching, which left one unconfirmed with grace. A “defect” does not necessarily render one unclean, for “the bread of his God, of the most holy and of the holy, shall he eat”, and he could not do this if unclean. See chapter 22: 4 - 6. It is blessed grace that permits the one of Aaron’s seed with a “defect” to eat, but such a one must keep a good conscience, and not touch any unclean thing. “The bread of his God” is not withheld from any upright or exercised soul. The holy things speak of Christ as the Object of complacency and delight to God. As souls feed on that they are inwardly formed in the appreciation of the Man who is entirely for God’s delight. In a sense every one born again can appreciate Christ. The man in Romans 7 says, “I delight in the law of God according to the inward man”. If Christ were presented to such a one he would delight in Christ. Indeed that is how the divine “seed” comes to light. Christ is presented in the glad tidings, and certain persons are attracted; they appreciate Christ as presented to them. But then He is presented that souls may know that they can be with God on the footing of that Man. A divinely exercised soul may feed upon what Christ was as obedient unto death, and upon what He was as having gone into death so that God and His people might have a common joy. That is the oblation and the peace-offering — all that Christ was as here in flesh for God’s pleasure, and what He was as going into death to be the Substance of our communion and joy. Indeed the anti-type surpasses the type, for I think we may say that eating the bread of

God spiritually would remove defects. J.B.S. used to say that *our* High Priest can remove all the defects in the members of His family!

Sometimes a "defect" is the result of one's own lack of spiritual diligence. Peter speaks of some being "blind, short-sighted", and he accounts for it by their lack of diligence to make their calling and election sure. Hebrews 12: 13 speaks of some as being "lame", but suggests that they may be "healed". Probably the "lame" one might be a Jewish believer of feeble faith, with whom there was danger that he might be stumbled and go back if he did not find grace to help him amongst the Christian company, and particularly if they did not "make straight paths" for their feet.

In Christianity no "defect" need be permanent; the normal working of grace would be in the direction of removing every defect. There is no necessity now for saints to be permanently incapacitated for holy service. There are many "dwarfs" today, but they might grow up to full stature if their desire and purpose was to do so!

LEVITICUS 22

Leviticus 22

No one of Aaron's seed is to approach the holy things or eat of them with uncleanness upon him. If there has been contact with anything unclean, the sun of that day must go down, and the flesh must be bathed with water, before the holy things may be eaten. The whole day is affected by what has taken place, and the soul has to learn by its sorrowful deprivation of "the holy things" how serious it is to contract uncleanness.

Then the seed of Aaron were forbidden to eat of "a dead carcase and what is torn" (verse 8). It was not forbidden to the ordinary Israelite, but even for him it rendered unclean until even, and necessitated washing (Leviticus 17: 15). "A dead carcase" would signify a source of food which had no sacrificial character; it would suggest that in which God has no pleasure. And "what is torn" would imply that such food had become available through violence. There is much which sometimes tempts the people of God, of which they would have to admit that there was nothing for God in it, and some of which is the fruit of violence being done to what is due to Him. Such food renders an Israelite unclean, but it is absolutely prohibited to one of the priestly seed.

In verses 10 - 16 the holy things are restricted to the priestly household. The priestly household has its own privileges. All of that household can eat — the slave, those born in the house, the daughter at home — but no stranger. Neither stranger, sojourner, nor hired servant may eat. It is only those who are of the household by purchase or by birth who can partake of the priestly food. It is one thing to sojourn with the priest, another to be part of his household. The sojourner and the hired servant represent those who are providentially near to the priest, but do not belong to him. It is a great thing to be conscious that one belongs by purchase to a priestly household! Such are not casual visitors or strangers. It supposes some who are not up to priesthood themselves, but who can hold themselves as purchased. The feeblest believer can do that; he can say, I am bought with a price.

Then "he that is born in his house ... may eat of his food". It supposes that there will be children born there. Where priestly conditions are maintained one would look for children to be born! And even young converts are entitled to the "holy things". What an unfolding of grace there is in this! The one with a defect, the purchased one, the child born, all entitled to eat of the "holy things" if clean!

"No stranger shall eat the holy thing". The "stranger" here is one "not of the seed of Aaron" (Numbers 16: 40). He is not at home in the priestly household; he does not belong to it. There are many scriptures which show what grace there is in the heart of God for the "stranger". He need not remain a "stranger"; he may become "a soul of purchase". "Ye are no longer strangers and foreigners, but ye are fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God" (Ephesians 2: 19). But no stranger *as such* can eat the holy thing.

"A priest's daughter who is married to a stranger may not eat of the heave-offering of the holy things". She is one who has been in the priestly household, and known what it was to enjoy priestly food, but she has entered into an association outside the priestly family.

She loses her right to the holy things. This would be a serious consideration for any true-hearted daughter of the priestly house. The principle of this would apply today. Any kind of association — marriage or otherwise — that links us intimately with those who have no priestly character or exercises is sure to deprive us practically of our share in priestly food. If we have known what it is to feed on Christ, and delight in Him, let us beware of forming links of friendship or companionship with those who are "strangers" to the priestly family!

But there is an intimation here of restoration. Verse 13 speaks of her becoming a widow, or being divorced, and returning to her father's house, as in her youth! How many have got away through associations which they have formed, only to find that they lose all that they went after! Through the sorrow of widowhood they come back to what they need never have left. They may even be "divorced" — disowned and cast off by the very persons who drew them away! What precious grace to think that such can go back to "her father's house, as in her youth", and "she may eat of her father's food".

The "stranger" here is not exactly an unbeliever; he is an Israelite, but not of the seed of Aaron. We have to beware that even converted people do not draw us away from priestly privileges and food. We have to be careful what kind of links we form even with believers. As we were seeing in the types of the tabernacle, they must be loops of blue, clasps of gold, clasps of copper, rods of silver! These things indicate the kind of links that are safe. Heavenly, divine spiritual links will never lead us away from spiritual privilege and food. We can *serve* all believers as we have opportunity, but we have to guard our associations if we wish to retain the privileges that belong to the priestly household.

Barnabas lost much by allowing his natural partiality for his nephew to be greater in his estimation than his link of partnership with Paul. It is sad to

think of one who had been a pattern of good works, and a comfort to the apostles — for they surnamed him “Son of consolation” — one who had a large and true appreciation of Paul, allowing his attachment to his nephew to deprive him of so much that might have been his priestly privilege! It was not that either the uncle or the nephew ceased to be believers, or to be servants of the Lord, but they both lost a priceless privilege. To be associates of Paul was the highest privilege of the moment, and they lost it, at any rate for the time. This shows the danger of unspiritual links with even true believers.

The closing section of this chapter is the last word in the book about the offerings, and it insists that there shall be no blemish or defect therein whether offered for a burnt-offering or a peace-offering to accomplish a vow. “As a voluntary offering” a bullock or a sheep might be offered “that hath a member too long or too short”. This would represent typically a lack of proportion in the apprehension of Christ. One feature of Christ made so much of that it is out of proportion to the rest in our apprehension, or another feature to which due place is not given. But the offerer in this case has no thought of blemish or defect in Christ. He simply has not things in intelligent and divinely adjusted proportion. One can be deeply thankful that such a voluntary offering is accepted, for with how many of us is there a lack of proportion in our apprehension of Christ! God accepts it, for it is *Christ* who is apprehended and offered, but He intimates to us at the same time that such an offering does not come up to what He looks for in a truly spiritual person. “As a vow it shall not be accepted”. Where there is that devotedness and spiritual energy of which a “vow” would be the expression there would be much exercise to have the perfections of Christ in their due proportion before the soul, so that we might be able to present them to God with intelligent apprehension, and in such a way as to be accepted, and to give pleasure to God.

LEVITICUS 23

Leviticus 23

"The set feasts of Jehovah ... my set feasts" are God's appointed seasons; they make known what is in His mind. They are not voluntary (see verse 38), or obligatory because of sins like sin- or trespass-offerings. They are things which the people of God have to take up *together* for His pleasure. This gives them a very precious character. They were to be proclaimed as "holy convocations"; they refer to what has to be taken up collectively as God's appointed seasons. It is not the thought of what springs out of our exercises or desires, but of what God appoints for His own pleasure.

Each of these feasts would bring all the people together, and if we think of what they typify we must see that they speak of things which would have the effect of bringing all the people of God together morally. No one can say, Mine is a different Passover from yours, or a different Wave-sheaf, or a different Oblation. They are fixed rallying points for God's people in relation to Himself, that they may be brought together morally. To be brought together merely in an outward way would not be a "holy convocation". It might be possible to get all the believers in a town together in one place, but if they all had different thoughts and views they would not be together morally.

What I understand by a "holy convocation" is that God's people are called together in a real and spiritual sense. They are united in the same mind, and in the same opinion (1 Corinthians 1: 10). All were together outwardly at Corinth, but they were not together morally. Theirs was not a "holy convocation", but the Apostle laboured that it might become one. We are all here in this room, but how far are we really united in the same mind and in the same opinion? God provides in His set feasts all that is essential to *unify* His people. If we go through these feasts, and keep them with God, we shall not have a divergent thought about anything. A company of persons together without a divergent thought, and every thought in harmony with God, is a "holy convocation". Divergent thoughts are the result of entertaining things which lie outside what is appointed of God.

There can be no doubt that there will be a "holy convocation" at the rapture. If the Lord's assembling shout rang out at this moment the whole assembly would be caught up without one divergent thought in all the myriads that compose it. The work of God goes on now to bring that about morally before it comes about by divine power at the rapture. He would have all His people to know what it is to have part in a "holy convocation" now.

It is instructive to see that "the sabbath of rest" comes first. It is not exactly one of the set feasts (see verse 38), but it comes in as preparatory to them all. It speaks of that restful spirit which God would have in the dwellings of His people. The sabbath was "an everlasting covenant. It shall be a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever" (Exodus 31: 16, 17). The thought of *rest* is essential to the covenant; it is very sweet that it should be so.

"The sabbath to Jehovah" is a complete cessation from our own activities, that we may contemplate in rest what God has done, and the character of His rest, and how He would have His people to share it. The "sabbath *of* Jehovah" is that God gives and appoints it; the "sabbath *to* Jehovah" is that His people regard Him in it. The words "to Jehovah" occur often in this chapter, and this shows how His pleasure in the feasts is a paramount thought. Elements of unrest brought in amongst the people of God break the sabbath of rest. We have to see to it that nothing takes us away from a restful attitude of soul God-ward; and this not merely in the meetings, but "in all your dwellings". Persons in a perturbed state of mind could never be a "holy convocation". If you are labouring and burdened — and I say this to my own heart — come to the Son of the Father, and He will give you rest. The sabbath is God calling men into communion with His own rest. But it is irksome to man, because the natural man does not care for communion with God; he prefers his own works to God's rest in Christ. Our "dwellings" are where we live in a spiritual sense; there must be sabbath conditions there — restful conditions.

The thought of "the assembly of Israel" was first introduced in connection with the passover (Exodus 12: 3). "The assembly" is "the congregation looked at as a moral whole, a corporate person before God". (Note to Exodus 12: 3 in the New Translation.) And if we consider the passover we shall see that it involves very real and practical oneness. One spotless Lamb has borne the judgment due to the sinful man, and His love in doing it is now the food of the sheltered. All that I was as a fallen natural man was under judgment, but Christ has borne the judgment in love, and I feed on Him now so as to live by Him. I have no longer before me the man after the order of Adam — the man in the flesh. I recognize that man as under judgment, but Christ has borne the judgment that I might live by Him. Is not this true for every believer on the face of the earth? Have we not all — in the light of Christ being sacrificed, and bearing the judgment due to us — the same divine estimate of ourselves, and the same precious thoughts of the worth of Christ, and of His sacrifice? As to ourselves we can only say that we deserved death and the judgment of God. As to Christ, we know that He has been sacrificed, and has borne the judgment due to us, that we might live by Him. Is there not perfect and universal accord throughout the whole assembly of God as to these divine

realities? I am not — for the moment — speaking of the shelter and safety which the Passover secures (for that is not the thought in Leviticus 23), but of the unity which it establishes throughout the Israel of God.

Then “the feast of unleavened bread to Jehovah” follows immediately upon the passover. Indeed in the New Testament the two feasts are identified “the feast of unleavened bread, which is called the passover” (Luke 22: 1). They go together morally, and are therefore put in the same section of this chapter. If all that I was as a man in the flesh came under judgment in the sacrifice of Christ, how can I tolerate the leaven of self-importance, or any of those features which God has judged in the death of Christ? The one who has truly fed on the Lamb roast with fire has something inwardly in his moral constitution which gives ability to estimate things according to God; he discerns that what is of the flesh is “leaven”; it has a corrupting and inflating character.

“Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread”. The unleavened bread is Christ. We see in Him a kind of humanity which had no corrupting or inflating elements in it. The temptation proved that He was unleavened. Adam had taken himself out of God’s hands in distrust and disobedience; he had coveted to possess what God had not given him; he had been allured by the prospect of being as God; he had dared to risk the pronounced penalty on disobedience. But Christ trusted in God; He would not act for Himself, or receive from the prince of this world; He would not leave for a moment the place of obedience and dependence; He would not tempt God by putting His word to the test. There was no corrupting or corruptible element there. Nor was there any inflation or puffing up, or anything in the slightest degree unreal. His prayer was “not out of feigned lips”; His thought went not beyond His word (Psalm 17: 1, 3). When they said, “Who art thou?” He answered, “Altogether that which I also say to you” (John 8: 25). He could speak of Himself as “a man who has spoken the truth to you” (John 8: 40.)

We may study every act of His, and every word, and we find nothing but “sincerity and truth”. That is “unleavened bread”; and it is to be eaten “seven days” — a perfect period, covering typically the whole of our life here.

One might say, I can never be like that! But can you eat it? Have you a taste for that kind of bread? If you eat it you will become unleavened. The “old leaven” is to be purged out that the assembly of God “may be a new lump, according as ye are unleavened” (1 Corinthians 5: 7). “Old leaven” would be something brought over from the old lump of dough, which corresponds with “our old man”. All that is corrupting, and tends to puffing up, and it has to be

purged out. The "new lump" corresponds with "the new man, which according to God is created in truthful righteousness and holiness".

In one sense the saints "*are* unleavened", for they are in Christ Jesus by the work of God, and Christ Jesus is made to them "wisdom from God, and righteousness, and holiness, and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1: 30). God cannot own for His pleasure any life in believers but the life of Christ. Then how can we be in fellowship with God if we practically own the life of "our old man"? Indeed, the very term "our old man" implies that we are not going on with that man now. As saints in Christ we have put him off, and have put on the new man. And now we have to keep the feast of unleavened bread during the whole period of our life here. This is not done by looking to see how imperfectly others are doing it, but by each one in uprightness of heart, and with a good conscience before God, seeking to maintain an unleavened character himself. As we feed on Christ we are nourished and strengthened, and He becomes our life practically, so that we can refuse the old leaven, and the leaven of malice and wickedness — and have with us "the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth". The whole Israel of God is to move on that line, and that is how assembly conditions and assembly unity are brought about. It is by each one refusing what is of the flesh, and giving place to that which is of Christ. This would bring us all together morally, would it not? Every day that we "celebrate the feast" of unleavened bread there is "an offering by fire". We know from Numbers 28 that it consisted of "two young bullocks, and one ram, and seven yearling lambs" for a burnt-offering, and other offerings. But here it is not specified in detail; it is simply that there is what goes up as sweet odour. As the people of God refuse the flesh, and give place to what is of Christ, they acquire ability to minister to the delight of God.

A new section of the chapter begins at verse 9 and goes down to verse 22. It will be noticed that this is "When ye come into the land that I give unto you, and ye reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the first-fruits of your harvest unto the priest. And he shall wave the sheaf before Jehovah to be accepted for you; on the next day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it". Christ risen is set forth in this deeply interesting type as the First-fruits of the land of divine promise and purpose. God's thoughts as to the condition and blessedness in which He would have His people before Him have reached fruition in One who rose on "the next day after the Sabbath". This speaks of a new beginning, but one which stands in relation to what preceded it.

There were promises made to the fathers, and ways of God with Israel which had in view the fulfilment of those promises, but every day of Israel's history only made more manifest that none of those promises or those ways could

come to fruition in connection with what they were as in the flesh. That history culminated in their rejection of the Promised One — the One in whom was embodied all “the truth of God” (Romans 15: 8). They had proved utterly unfaithful — breaking the law, disregarding the covenant, despising the promises, killing the prophets, and last, most terrible of all, betraying and murdering the Just One — so that on what was truly the greatest and most momentous sabbath in their history He was lying in Joseph’s tomb. The fact that the wave-sheaf would be a sheaf of barley, for barley harvest came before wheat harvest, might have some reference to the state of Israel as unfaithful, for barley only appears in the offerings in the jealousy offering of Numbers 5. It would suggest that Christ came in to take up the question of the unfaithfulness of those who have had a place as in relation with God. The exercise of having utterly failed as the people of God is a deeper exercise than the conviction of a man who has never professed to know God. Israel will have this exercise, and many of us have known the bitterness of it. But grace entitles us to know that Christ has borne the judgment due to our unfaithfulness. Israel will yet be brought to own that her unfaithfulness has been fully exposed, but that her suffering Messiah has taken it up, and borne the judgment due to it, and that as the Risen One He has become her acceptance. She will then enjoy without a disturbing element the land which Jehovah has given her, and eat its bread. Israel will start afresh with God on the ground of a risen Christ, and they will get “the sure mercies of David”.

But the Sheaf of the First-fruits is for us as well as for Israel. Christ has taken up everything that attached to us as a righteous liability, whether as ungodly sinners or as professing Christians, and He has met every divine claim, and has come forth in resurrection to be accepted for us. There is no question of any title that we might have in ourselves or of anything in which one might differ from another. God’s thought of acceptance for the whole of His Israel — for every believer on the face of the earth — is set forth in a risen Man. What a unifying power there is in the apprehension of this! There is one acceptance for us all, and it is that glorious Person, alive from the dead, in spotless and eternal suitability to the resurrection world which He has entered. In this world there may be a thousand differences between us, but with God we have a risen Christ — Christ only and wholly — for acceptance.

But then, this is not simply that Christ is our righteousness so that we have peace with God. It is an acceptance which sets us at liberty to eat the bread of the land which God has given us. He has prepared wonderful things for them that love Him, but they are not things which eye can see, or ear can hear, or which naturally come into man’s heart. They are spiritual things, the fruit of “that hidden wisdom which God had predetermined before the ages for our

glory". God has given us a wonderful land, the blessedness of which lies outside all natural ken, but is revealed by His Spirit, and entered into by spiritual persons. The "Sheaf of first-fruits" is Christ in relation to that land, and as accepted for us in view of our enjoying the "bread" of that land. With what supreme liberty of heart, then, can the people of God, as having kept this feast, enjoy their unseen and eternal portion in Christ! A risen Man is the First-fruits. This shows us plainly that all the after-fruits — if we may use the term — are after that order; they belong to a spiritual region which lies beyond death; they are "food which abides unto life eternal" (John 6: 27).

"Ye shall bring a sheaf of the first-fruits of your harvest unto the priest. And he shall wave the sheaf before Jehovah, to be accepted for you". God would have the whole of His Israel to recognize a risen Christ as the First-fruits of what is in His heart for them. He would have them in spiritual intelligence to wave that blessed One before Him, as knowing that He is accepted for them so that in liberty of heart they may enjoy the bread of

"Life's eternal home,
Where sin, nor want, nor woe, nor death can come".

This begins a new period with God; it is "on the next day after the sabbath". It stands in relation to a period that has closed; substantiating all the promises, securing all that the former ways of God had in view, but putting all now on the footing of resurrection. So that all the promises of God are Yea and Amen in Christ the risen One, and as substantiated in Him they are known as present realities. It is a new period marked by the enjoyment of spiritual realities of which the risen Christ is the First-fruits.

Then on the same day a he-lamb is offered as a burnt-offering, with its oblation and drink-offering.

Along with the blessed apprehension of Christ as the First-fruits in resurrection these various offerings have their place. Their import has come before us in considering the early chapters of this book, save that of the drink-offering, which is here mentioned for the first time in Leviticus. It is striking that what speaks of joy — for the drink-offering is of wine — should be introduced in this connection. And we may remember that the wine in the drink-offering is the same measure as the oil in the oblation. It speaks of "joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14: 17). God has great delight in the joy of His people in Christ; the drink-offering was to be poured out "in the sanctuary".

The next feast is of peculiar interest, for it brings before us what pertains to the present period — the "new oblation" of Pentecost. This clearly sets forth

the assembly as "first-fruits" to God. This has a definite connection with the preceding feast, for the day of bringing and waving the sheaf of first-fruits is the starting point from which the "seven weeks" or "fifty days" are counted to the day of presenting the "new oblation". The resurrection of Christ is the starting point of a course of divine exercise and education which results in the "two wave-loaves" being brought out of the "dwellings" of God's people. I understand this to convey that what is in God's mind to effect gets such a place with His people that they can bring it out of their dwellings in a definite shape for His pleasure. But this is the result of a "fifty days" exercise following upon the apprehension of Christ risen as "First-fruits". We know what filled those "fifty days" historically. The risen One was seen "during forty days" by those "to whom also he presented himself living, after he had suffered,

with many proofs". He spoke to them "of the things which concern the kingdom of God". He "assembled with them", and "by the Holy Spirit charged" them; educating them by His own action to think of assembling, and of acting by the Holy Spirit. He led them to think of the Holy Spirit as the power which would come upon them to constitute them His witnesses to the end of the earth. Then He was taken up, and was beheld by them going into heaven, and they were told that He should "thus come in the manner in which ye have beheld him going into heaven". Then there were another ten days during which they knew Him as having gone into heaven, and were characterised by going "up to the upper chamber", which was an indication that they knew their relation to Him as in heaven. The eleven were there, the women, Mary the mother of Jesus, and His brethren. The true "Israel of God" was there; and it was not simply that they *met* there; they *stayed* there; it corresponded with the "dwellings" of Leviticus 23: 17. "Continual prayer" marked that dwelling, an enlightened subjection to the Holy Scriptures, and a zealous care for the witness and service which had been committed to them. "And when the day of Pentecost was now accomplishing, they were all together in one place. And there came suddenly a sound out of heaven as of a violent impetuous blowing, and filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues, as of fire, and it sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave to them to speak forth" (Acts 2: 1 - 4). It was out of that dwelling that the "two wave-loaves" were brought.

We have not in this type the truth of the assembly as one body; that, as we know, is symbolized by the "one loaf" (1 Corinthians 10: 17). The "two wave-loaves" would set forth rather the saints in their witness here to Jesus as made Lord and Christ in heaven. They are presented for God's pleasure as "a new oblation". They take the place of Jesus here under the eye of God, for He was

the Oblation in all His perfection in the power of the Spirit. But now there is "a new oblation", not unleavened as He was, but "baken with leaven" to intimate that it is composed of those in whom there has been a former working of sin, but in whom that working has ceased through the action of fire — self-judgment in the power of the Spirit. Jesus is no longer here personally, but He is maintained here in witness in the "new oblation" for the pleasure of God. The *two* loaves might have reference to the mutuality and sympathy which marked the relations of the saints one toward another, of which Acts 2:42-45; Acts 4:32 bear such blessed witness.

The "two wave-loaves" are "first-fruits to Jehovah". This helps to define the aspect of the assembly which is set before us in this type. It is not the assembly in those heavenly relationships and privileges which are peculiar to it, but the assembly viewed as taking the place of Israel on earth, and maintaining in testimony here what will be brought forth for God in the great ingathering of the world to come. On the day of Pentecost the kingdom of God was here in the power of the Spirit, and there was adequate witness to the One who is made Lord and Christ in heaven. A witness not only in word, but in the manner of life and mutual relations of a company of men and women in this world. The substance of that witness was "fine flour" — the life of Christ in His saints, taking form through self-judgment, and through the spiritual influences and education of those wonderful "fifty days", culminating in all being filled with the Holy Spirit. Such a result can only be brought out of "dwellings" that have the character seen in Acts 1 and 2. The "two wave-loaves" are the product of saints dwelling in the blessed conditions which are seen there. We have to know the power of those conditions in order to be true to the character of the assembly as set forth in the wave-loaves. Then the saints will be "first-fruits"; they will express the features of Christ in the interval between His being "taken up" and His coming again.

God would have His people to come unitedly to the apprehension of what the day of Pentecost means, and what is involved in the bringing forth of the "new oblation". It raises the question of where we dwell, and what we can bring forth as "first-fruits". God would have us to think much of the assembly as filling up in witness this present interval during the absence of Christ in heaven, and before He resumes His ways with Israel on earth. If we do not cherish it in our "dwellings" we shall not be able to bring it forth as having taken form. Those who are known as "high church" people train their disciples to think much of "the church". But their "church" is the mustard tree or the leavened meal rather than the "treasure" or the "one pearl of great value" (Matthew 13). It is the public professing body, in which people are supposed to be born again because they have been baptized, and to maintain a vital link

with Christ by sacraments. In that system all depends on the validity of so-called "orders", so that it exalts a human priesthood to a place of supreme importance. And it makes all uncertain, for there is not a "priest" on earth who can prove the validity of his "orders". The Anglican claims to have such; the Pope will not acknowledge that he has; and with the highest authorities in the "church" disputing about it, who can be sure? In contrast with all this, let us think much of the assembly as composed of all those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and love Him, and as indwelt by the Spirit are in His life, and are really "first-fruits" to God. Let us be more and more exercised that this should be brought forth in testimony here! We shall then be true churchmen! The tendency amongst some Protestants has been so to recoil from the pretensions of a corrupt church that they make individual blessing the great thing, and do not think enough of what is collective and corporate. Let us be good churchmen in a true and spiritual sense! God would bring His people into unity in regard to the assembly. Every true believer cherishes the thought of Christ; then let us cherish the thought of the assembly, for it is Christ's. Paul says, "I speak as to Christ, and as to the assembly". The assembly is of Christ, and for Christ.

Then with the bread are presented "seven he-lambs without blemish, yearlings, and one young bullock, and two rams: they shall be a burnt-offering to Jehovah with their oblation, and their drink-offerings". The saints as having the Spirit have a remarkable capacity for the apprehension and appreciation of Christ. I believe that no company will ever have such apprehensions of Christ as the assembly. God delights that we should take up His perfections and bring them as "sweet odour". There is a sin-offering,

and peace-offerings also. God would bring us into perfect accord in the appreciation of Christ, and give us "to be like-minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus; that ye may with one accord, with one mouth, glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 15: 5, 6). The "offering up of the nations", as "acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15: 16) would be much like the wave-loaves.

The peace-offerings introduce the thought of the fellowship. The teaching of the apostles makes everything of Christ, and that forms the fellowship (Acts 2: 42). The fellowship derives character from the appreciation of Christ, and the refusal of all that is inconsistent with the life of Christ. Then we can get near to one another, and there are all the elements of a "holy convocation" in love and liberty, nothing "servile" about it; the saints by love serve one another.

This section of the chapter ends with a lovely touch of gracious consideration for "the poor" and "the stranger". It shows the spirit of grace which God would

have to mark His people; it is His own character reproducing itself in them. There will always be those who answer to "the poor" and "the stranger", and they are always to be thought of when God's people are reaping the rich harvest of their blessings in Christ.

Verses 23 - 25 are another section of the chapter, and this, and what follows, refers to what takes place "in the seventh month". The "seventh month" brings things to spiritual completion; the set times or appointed seasons end in that month. Indeed it is definitely spoken of in Exodus 23: 16 as "the end of the year". So that there is a very marked difference between the feasts we have been considering and those which now come before us. The passover, the feast of unleavened bread, the wave-sheaf, and the two wave-loaves presented fifty days later at Pentecost, are all in relation to the *beginning* of the year. But the seventh month has the *end* of the year in view. The one set of types has to do with the *beginning* of God's ways, the other set with the *end* of those ways. To see this clearly is essential to the spiritual understanding of what is here set before us. All has a primary reference to Israel, but it is not confined to Israel, for the passover, the feast of unleavened bread, Christ risen as the wave-sheaf of first-fruits, are all seen in the New Testament to stand connected with the assembly. And the "new oblation" of Pentecost is clearly so also, though it does not regard the assembly in its own peculiar privileges, but as "first-fruits" of the great harvest which God is going to reap from the earth.

The "seventh month" brings us to contemplate the end of God's year — the *end* of His ways with His people. His ways must reach the "expected end", for His thoughts toward His people are "thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you in your latter end a hope" (Jeremiah 29: 11). As regards Israel God has not forgotten His ancient promises, and His gifts and calling are not subject to repentance. Israel is in the darkness of unbelief today. They broke the law, despised the promises, persecuted and killed the prophets, betrayed and murdered their Messiah, and refused the Spirit's testimony to Him as risen and glorified. But the promises must be fulfilled; God's end must be reached; and the time is drawing near when Israel will enter upon her "seventh month", and come on the first day of that month as the new moon into the shining of Christ. What "a memorial of blowing of trumpets" will there be on that day! "Blow the trumpet at the new moon, at the set time, on our feast day" (Psalm 81: 3), will then be fulfilled. The Spirit of God will cause to sound afresh in Israel's ears all that is connected with the promises and covenant of God, and all that depends on her long-rejected Messiah for its realization. What an awakening for Israel then, and for myriads of Gentiles, as the trumpets sound

forth that Christ is in heaven, but that He is about to come back, and that the kingdom is almost immediately to be established!

Peter told them on the day of Pentecost that what they then witnessed was the very thing which the prophet Joel had said should be in the last days. The light of a risen and heavenly Christ was shining for Israel then, and the remnant came into it by God's electing grace, and there was a wonderful "blowing of trumpets". And wherever the apostles went "to the Jew first" they blew the trumpets, but the "joyful sound" fell on heedless ears save as there was "a remnant according to election of grace".

But "in the seventh month, on the first of the month", after the translation of the assembly, God will cause the light of a risen and heavenly Christ to shine again on a remnant in Israel, and the trumpets will sound to awaken Israel to the One who is coming in Kingly glory to His city and His land. God will have the *end* of His ways in view, and He will work effectively to bring that end to pass.

Now while the primary application of this is to Israel, we can see that there has been something analogous in the ways of God with the assembly. A long period elapsed from Pentecost during which things went from good to bad, and from bad to worse. There was a long course of declension and departure. But God never lost sight of the assembly's heavenly portion and destiny, and I think we may say reverently that it was morally impossible for God to leave things in the state to which man's unfaithfulness had brought them. He had His own *end* in view — the return of the Bridegroom, and the translation of the raised and changed saints. It was morally impossible — that is, it was unsuitable to God — that Christ should come without a people being prepared for the rapture. The "blowing of trumpets" will awaken the remnant of Israel to their coming Messiah-King. In principle the midnight cry of Matthew 25: 6 was a "blowing of trumpets" for the assembly.

If the assembly was no longer practically in the light of her glorious Head, nor answering to that light by an ungrieved indwelling Spirit, she must have what answers to the "seventh month" of revival, and of restored heavenly light and testimony. I have no doubt the "seventh month" in this sense began in those spiritual movements which preceded what men call the Reformation, and the light of Christ and the sound of the trumpets has been increasing ever since. And particularly during the last hundred years God has given a wonderful ministry of revival — a more glorious presentation of a risen and heavenly and coming Christ than has been known since the days of the apostles. How wonderful that God should have come in to give the assembly, as it were, a new start, in view of the end before Him! So that the saints might take up

afresh the character which pertained to the beginning — “unleavened bread” and the “new oblation”. And that we might be prepared for the moment when “the Spirit and the bride say, Come!”

Then the next section of the chapter (verses 26 - 32) gives us “the day of the atonement”. This is “the tenth of this seventh month”. We might have thought that the month should begin with this, but that is not the divine order. It is an awakened and revived people who keep the holy convocation of the day of atonement, and afflict their souls. I have no doubt that it will be in the light of Christ in heaven, and in the grace of the Spirit as poured out on them, that the remnant of Israel will learn the marvellous reality and import of the death of their Messiah.

The day of atonement, as we have seen in considering chapter 16, gives a unique presentation of the death of Christ. It comes in as meeting the glory of God after the complete failure of that which had stood in relation to Him. It supposes the breakdown of everything according to the flesh in a people who had a place in relation to God. It meets the exercise awakened by a history of departure and corruption, and the ruin of the outward order as set up by God. We have to take things up now in the light of the departure and complete failure of the people of God and the priesthood. Such will be the exercise of an awakened and enlightened Israel, and such is ours today. Each one must “afflict” his soul, for each one has been involved in the common sin of a ruined profession. Not one of us can say that we are not involved in the sin of christendom’s departure from God. Most earnest christians will admit there has been, and is, great failure, but the remedy which is generally proposed is increased activity. It is thought that if christians were more earnest and energetic, things would be put right. But the case is too serious to be met that way. “Ye shall do no manner of work on that same day; for it is a day of atonement, to make atonement for you before Jehovah your God”. It has to be met by the solemn recognition that all on our side has failed and come to ruin. This is a humbling exercise, but it leads to a great appreciation of the death of Christ and of the Mercy-seat. Everything that is for God is the fruit of mercy, and stands in the value of the death of Christ. The remnant includes all that is for God, and such have to learn that all blessing is the fruit of God acting from Himself when every title to blessing has been forfeited by man. It was so at the beginning; God brought in blessing not because there was anything in man to deserve it, but because of what He was, and because of the delight He had in Christ, and because of the value of the death of Christ. Now at the end of His ways He brings in recovery on the same principle.

One cannot but be impressed by the fact that the Spirit of God has greatly magnified the death of Christ in the spiritual apprehensions of saints in these last days. The true import of that death could only be apprehended in the light of Christ glorified, and by giving place to the Spirit. One of the greatest spiritual gains of recent times is the enlarged and deepened understanding of that precious death in its varied aspects, in its wondrous results for God and man, in its blessed import as bringing to an end the history of the man after the flesh, and giving full expression to the holy love of God, and also disclosing all the perfections of Christ in the fullest way, and revealing His love for the saints individually and for the assembly. The way the Lord's Supper has been restored, and the revived affections of the saints in relation to it, is a very striking feature of the present ways of God, and it has greatly served to magnify the death of the Lord before the hearts of His own.

The closing section of the chapter brings before us "the feast of booths", which commenced on "the fifteenth day of this seventh month", and lasted seven days. It is referred to in Exodus as "the feast of ingathering", and here it is said, "when ye have gathered in the produce of the land". It thus looks on to the time when all the promises will be fulfilled, and Israel will be in the enjoyment of their full fruition. The moon would be full on the fifteenth day of the month, which suggests Israel having come into full-orbed splendour in the light of the Sun of righteousness. They will then be settled in the land, but their generations are to know that Jehovah caused the children of Israel to dwell in booths when He brought them out of the land of Egypt. They have reached the consummation of the ways of God, but they are not to forget the former history of those ways. Jehovah will then have praise from Israel, not only for the millennial blessedness which they enjoy, but for all those wilderness ways of grace by which He led them, and in which He cared for them in the past. In the actual presence of those ways they were murmurers and rebels, but they will eventually give Jehovah the praise that is due to Him for His ways, and for the end to which they have led. The "beautiful trees, palm branches and the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook" speak of the luxuriance of the land, and its restful shade, while reminding them of a care that was equally wonderful in wilderness conditions. This is pre-eminently the feast of joy. "Ye shall rejoice before Jehovah your God seven days".

If the "feast of booths" brings us, in type, to the end of God's ways with Israel it remains for us to ask if there is anything that corresponds with it as the end of His ways with the assembly? I have no doubt there is. The assembly has her own relation to the time which is prefigured by "the feast of booths". She has had made known to her "the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself for the administration of the fulness of

times; to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth; in him, in whom we have also obtained an inheritance, being marked out beforehand according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his own will, that we should be to the praise of his glory who have pre-trusted in the Christ". Then addressing Gentiles he adds, "In whom ye also have trusted, having heard the word of the truth, the glad tidings of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, ye have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the earnest of our inheritance to the redemption of the acquired possession to the praise of his glory" (Ephesians 1: 9 - 14).

"The feast of booths" is typically that side of "the fulness of times" which relates to "the things upon the earth". To get the side which relates to "the things in the heavens" we must read the epistle to the Ephesians. We see there the assembly's part in Christ, and the inheritance which the saints of the present period have in Him. And the Holy Spirit of promise is the earnest of our inheritance. As sealed with the Holy Spirit we have the enjoyment now of the inheritance, for He is the "earnest" of it. He gives us some of the value and blessedness of it beforehand; we have some of the *substance* of it, so that it is even now an "acquired possession", though we still await the actuality.

In God's "great love wherewith he loved us (we too being dead in offences)", He "has quickened us with the Christ ... and has raised us up together, and has made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus". The rapture is thus anticipated in spirit; the saints, quickened, elevated, and seated, have reached in spirit the *end* which divine love has purposed. And this in order that God "might display in the coming ages the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus". We sit down under all the beauty of a heavenly Christ in what may be spoken of as "the eternal tabernacles". This is the *end* of God's ways and working with His saints, to which He would bring us in spirit even now. As the saints reach this by the work of God they are ready for the rapture, for they are already in spirit where the rapture will put them actually. They have reached God's *end* spiritually; the rapture will bring them to it in actuality. They are fully ready, in concert with the Spirit, to say, Come!

Then there is a beautiful hint in the chapter before us of something even beyond the "feast of booths". That feast lasts seven days, but at the end of it there is an "eighth day". I believe the joy of the millennium will lead the saints on earth to desire and look for what is eternal, and I have no doubt they will reach "the eighth day" in the new earth, when the tabernacle of God will be with men, and God will be all in all. Indeed, as we know from Numbers 29,

there will be a measure of decline through the seven days of the "feast of booths". No actual departure, but a measure of decline, so that there will not be the same wealth in the affections God-ward at the end as at the beginning. The full moon of the fifteenth day — how true a figure of Israel! — will soon begin to wane. The flesh and blood condition was not God's eternal thought for man, and I think He will manifest this to faith by allowing it to appear that man in that condition even in millennial circumstances is not able to maintain full or perfect response to God. This will make the "eighth day" necessary for faith, as it surely is for God. Its being "the eighth day" shows that it has a connection with what has gone before, but adds a perfection that could never be found while men continued in the flesh and blood condition. They will look for the new earth with its eternal conditions, and its abiding rest. There will be no decline there, for God will be all in all. Every vessel will be filled with God — God known in His eternal rest.

We, too, through infinite grace, know something greater than "the fulness of times". Even the blessedness of the world to come must give place to God's eternal day. And our characteristic day is "the first day of the week". That is the beginning of what is wholly new, spiritual, and eternal. "In the last, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He that believes on me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this he said concerning the Spirit, which they that believed on him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified"

(John 7: 37 - 39). The Lord thus connected the "eighth day" with the gift of the Spirit, and with Himself glorified. This introduces what is eternal. "The great day of the feast" is typical of God's eternal day.

It is by these wondrous things, which cover all the ways of God founded on redemption right on to His eternal rest, that God would bring His people together in unity. And this, as we have seen, not only in relation to His original thoughts, but — and this especially in our days — in relation to His blessed movements of recovery when all that He set up originally had been departed from. The "seventh month" speaks of recovery brought about by the renewed shining of Christ upon His people, by the sounding out of a special testimony, and by the exercises of the day of atonement, leading to the possession of that which God has given to His saints as their inheritance, and the ingathering of its fruits.

The unity of the people of God is brought about in a special manner in a day of departure. It is not only that God would have His people to be in unity as to the original basis of fellowship, but they are to be in unity as to the peculiar

conditions of a day of revival and recovery. From Joshua's day to Nehemiah there was no celebration of the "feast of booths". In a day of recovery it was taken up by the returned remnant. We know how this history repeated itself in the assembly. The true *end* of God's ways was kept before the saints in those victorious days of spiritual conflict when the apostles were led in triumph in the Christ. That answered to Joshua's day. But for many centuries the "end" of God's year was little thought of. But now that that end has drawn nigh He is bringing His people back from Babylonish captivity to build the house and the wall, and to keep the feast of booths. What a voice this has for those who have "ears to hear"!

LEVITICUS 24

Leviticus 24

The teaching of this chapter has reference to a time of general darkness, for it is "from evening to morning" that Aaron is to dress the lamp; and in the reviler we see a figure of apostasy. The whole chapter is one section, for, as we have remarked before, each section of this book is introduced by the words, "Jehovah spoke to Moses". In presence of surrounding darkness spiritual light is to be maintained, and in presence of conditions which will culminate in open apostasy the reality of how God would retain His people before Him for His pleasure is to be maintained in faith and love. These are exercises which are peculiarly appropriate at the present time. For it is still the night of Christ's rejection, and apostasy is imminent in the christian profession.

It is the exercise of all saints to bring "pure beaten olive oil" for the light, to light the lamp continually. The shining of the light depends on each one; every one of us is either contributing to the light, or more or less hindering and obscuring it. Not even an apostle could bring a spiritual ministry among a carnal people. Paul told the Corinthians plainly that he could not speak to them "as to spiritual, but as to fleshly; as to babes in Christ. I have given you milk to drink, not meat, for ye have not yet been able, nor indeed are ye yet able; for ye are yet carnal" (1 Corinthians 3: 1 - 3). Amongst a carnal people the ministry even of the greatest gift is restrained and limited, and unless there is extraordinary spiritual power in the vessels of ministry what is ministered soon drops to the level of the people.

The ministry of Christ is still here in the power of the Spirit, but it is maintained in human vessels, and through the spiritual exercises of the saints generally. We are all responsible to bring oil for the light. This supposes that we have bought oil for ourselves (Matthew 25: 9), and have it in our vessels — that we have a supply of the Spirit, and are able to pray in the Holy Spirit. The saints, as possessed of the Spirit, are furnished with that which alone will maintain the light. The fact that we have the Spirit should beget peculiar and intense exercise; this is suggested in "beaten" oil. It is as we give place to the Spirit ourselves that we can bring oil for the light. We are to be interested in the testimony, and prayerfully concerned about the servants and the ministry, not supposing that it rests with the gifts to supply the oil. The three thousand converted on the day of Pentecost "persevered in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles, in breaking of bread and *prayers*". No doubt their prayers would be largely of the same character as the prayer in Acts 4: 29, which had its answer in verse 31. When Paul asks for the prayers of the Ephesian saints

"in order that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the glad tidings ... that I may be bold in it as I ought to speak", he is calling upon them to contribute to the maintenance of the light!

All through the night of Christ's rejection and absence He is to be maintained as light amongst the saints in a ministry which is wholly in the power of the Spirit. We have all to be concerned that the purity and brilliance of the light should not wane. It is striking how purity is emphasized in these verses — "pure beaten olive oil for the light", "the pure candlestick", "the pure table", "pure frankincense". There needs to be holy jealousy in a time of darkness and departure merging into apostasy that all connected with the light and the table should be maintained in purity, uncontaminated by human admixtures. This is "outside the veil".

Bringing beaten oil for the light suggests a spiritual exercise to be taken up by all saints, but it is instructive to see that *Aaron* was to dress the lamp continually from evening to morning. The priestly service of Christ in connection with the maintenance of the light is indispensable. Each vessel of ministry must prove that His grace alone suffices, and that His power is perfected in weakness, and that it is only as His power tabernacles over one that there can be a shedding forth of "pure" and spiritual light (2 Corinthians 12: 9). "The Lord stood with me, and gave me power, that through me the proclamation might be fully made, and all those of the nations should hear" (2 Timothy 4: 17). It is sweet to know that the priestly dressing of the lamps, and their arrangement before God, will be carried on by the skilful hand of Christ until the "morning". Indeed all is of Himself, and by the grace of God. If spiritual conditions are brought about in the saints which enable them to contribute "oil for the light" it is the fruit of divine grace; and then the living activities of Christ secure the continual shining of that precious ministry which is the light of the holy place.

We learn from Exodus 30: 7 that whenever Aaron dressed the lamps he burned "fragrant incense" on the golden altar — "a continual incense before Jehovah throughout your generations". The maintenance of the light is associated with that which speaks of the intercession of Christ — an intercession in which the "holy priesthood" can have part with Him. Spiritual light cannot be maintained without prayer.

In the early days of the assembly the light was undimmed. There were spiritual and prayerful conditions amongst the saints, and the apostles and other gifts ministered Christ in purity, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. And I believe God is working now to bring about faithful and devoted affections in

His people, so that spiritual conditions may contribute to a full shining of the light. He would have the light undimmed at the end even as it was at the beginning. The words "before Jehovah" occur four times in verses 1 - 8. It is a question of what is preserved in spiritual reality and power as before God for His pleasure. Is it not a great delight to God that there should be the shining forth in spiritual light of the preciousness and beauty and glory of Christ amongst His saints in the holy place while all around is darkness? And while the very air of christendom is filled with the spirit of the coming apostasy? If things are secured first before God for His pleasure there can be no doubt they will be effective as witness here.

Then the "twelve cakes" of "fine wheaten flour" speak of the saints as having Christ as their life. We cannot be too simple in recognizing that God has brought in everything for His own pleasure in Christ,

and that nothing else can come under His eye with complacency. It was once all here in "one loaf", but now it is in "twelve". God is going to make what was in Christ appear in the whole company of His people. It would be well for every young convert to get the idea at the very beginning, "God has taken me up that Christ might be my life, and that He might make me like Christ". Such a thought would have a profound effect on his whole subsequent course.

"Christ ... who is our life", is a wonderful statement. I understand it to mean that what the world is to the unconverted, Christ has become to the christian company. He has become our life. An old man was asked, "If I could prove that there was no such person as the Lord Jesus Christ, what effect would it have upon you?" His answer was, "I should fall to pieces"! Every true lover of Christ would say, "If you take away Christ you have taken all that is life to me". The pleasure of God at the present moment is found in those to whom Christ has become life. Christ is cherished in their hearts as the Man of God's pleasure, and therefore they cannot go on now with what is not after Christ. It is their continual exercise to give place to Christ, and to refuse what is not Christ. In that way the "fine wheaten flour" comes into evidence. It is remarkable that the twelve cakes should be spoken of as "an offering by fire to Jehovah" (verses 7, 9), for they were not burned as a sweet odour, but eaten by the priests. As baked they had been subject to the action of fire, and perhaps this indicates that there are testings which result in what is of Christ taking a definite shape in the saints for the pleasure of God. They come before Him as the fruit of exercises which they have passed through, involving severe testing, but resulting in their having value as an offering.

The "two wave-loaves" of Pentecost typify the saints as found here in testimony — the "first-fruits" to God of that great harvest which He will gather

from the earth. But the “twelve cakes” of shewbread give the thought of what is before God as “a bread of remembrance”. They bring before God the remembrance of what Christ was under His eye for His delight, and they indicate that God has it before Him in view of public administration. That character of things is soon to be in universal ascendancy, and the world to come will be under its administration. “When the Christ is manifested who is our life, then shall ye also be manifested with him in glory” (Colossians 3: 4). Think of being in the secret of this while all is darkness around, and the elements of apostasy present!

The “two tenths” in each cake would suggest uniformity. We do not see here a figure of the saints as differing in divine sovereignty, having “distinctions of gifts”, as in 1 Corinthians 12 or Romans 12, but as being all alike morally because Christ is the life of all. What we get in Colossians down to chapter 3: 17 are things in which the saints are characterized by uniformity. It is the grace of Christ in features which are alike in all. We can all be alike in “bowels of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering”, and in “love which is the bond of perfectness”. All that is “fine wheaten flour”. The saints are thus seen in spiritual uniformity, as taking constitution and character from Christ. What a delight for the heart of God!

The “two rows, six in a row” suggest to my mind the thought of mutuality. In Colossians the words “one another” recur again and again. “Do not lie to one another”; “forbearing one another, and forgiving one another”; “in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another”. This is not *fellowship*, which is our common bond in a hostile scene, but *mutuality* — the way we act towards one another in the christian circle.

“Pure frankincense upon each row” would refer, I think, to the Spirit of Christ coming out in the way we pray for one another, and for all saints. Paul had deep exercise for the Colossians, and those in Laodicea, and for as many as had not seen his face in flesh (Colossians 2: 1). And he looked for the saints to “persevere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us also”. He reminds them, too, that Epaphras was “always combating earnestly for you in prayers, to the end that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God” (Colossians 4: 2, 12). The saints are thus before God in the fragrance of a spirit of dependence and confidence in which everything is sought from God that will be for His pleasure. It suggests that the saints cannot be upon the pure table as a bread of remembrance apart from the fragrance of a spirit of intercession that confides in God, and draws all from God. I do not believe that a single grace of Christ appears in the saints under the eye of God, or is maintained, apart from prayer[†].

The one who "blasphemed the Name" (verses 10 - 23) represents that amongst the people of God which is really apostasy. It is the product of a mixture of what is of God with what is of the world; for he was

[†]For other remarks on the candlestick and the shewbread, the reader is referred to "An Outline of Exodus," chapter 25.

"the son of an Israelitish woman, but withal the son of an Egyptian". Where such a mixture is found it leads to strife, and ultimately to blasphemy. When that point is publicly reached in what has been the christian profession it will come under the unsparing judgment of God.

LEVITICUS 25

Leviticus 25

Chapters 25 and 26 bring out the conditions on which “the land that I will give you” could be held and enjoyed. God would have His people ever to remember that the land was *His*. They were not to be independent proprietors of the freehold. They were to hold it as the gift of sovereign love, and to hold it in relation to the Giver; it was His inheritance (Exodus 15: 17), and they were “to him a people of inheritance” (Deuteronomy 4: 20). Their title was one of absolute grace, but the rights in grace of the Giver were always reserved. This brought out the state of their hearts. Apart from a right attitude of heart towards the One who had conferred the inheritance there could be neither true appreciation of the inheritance, nor any right possession of it. They might be actually in Canaan through God’s providential ordering and His forbearance, but if the land were not held in relation to the Giver it morally ceased to be the inheritance.

On Jehovah’s part all that He claimed were rights of grace. The Pentateuch does not contain a more touching expression of God’s rights in grace than is set forth in this chapter. The sabbatical year, and the year of jubilee with its provisions of liberty and complete restoration show the character of the Giver of the land, and the spirit with which He would have all His heirs imbued. And they bring out, typically, the ultimate issue of His ways with His people. The “sabbath of rest” speaks of what remains to be entered into, and the “year of jubilee” of that complete restoration in grace under new covenant conditions by which Israel will return to all that they have forfeited by their sin and unbelief; and, indeed, by which they will for the first time truly enter into God’s rest. For, as we know, Joshua did not really bring them into the rest of the inheritance (Hebrews 4: 8), though they came in an outward way into the land of Canaan. The true fulfilment of God’s promises and purposes as to Israel’s inheritance and entering into His rest awaits a yet future day.

In the meantime the love of God has given to the partakers of the heavenly calling a wondrous inheritance in Christ. But it can only be enjoyed with Him as we hold it in a sense of the love that has given it, and with reference to His will in the use we make of it. We are tested as to how we take up the spiritual blessings which God has given us, and whether we really hold them in relation to Him, and to all that is before Him for His pleasure. What God has given us in Christ is the expression and witness of His love, and as we thus hold it we wish to take up the great gain of it in relation to His pleasure. Otherwise the abundance of the blessing may turn to self-consideration, and the joy of it

with God be lost. We may be occupied with what "the land" is to us, and not hold it in relation to the love and pleasure of God. There is a warning as to this in the fact that the sabbatical year probably ceased to be observed about Solomon's time, as we gather by reckoning back 490 years from 2 Chronicles 36: 21.

The "sabbath of rest" in the seventh year was a wonderful testimony to what was in the heart of God. *Love* gave the land, and love would have it to be held in relation to what was before God. His thought was to bring in rest. God was the great Worker in Genesis 1, but He worked in view of rest on the seventh day, and when that day came He blessed and hallowed it "because that on it he rested from all his work which God had created in making it" (Genesis 2: 3). God ever has in view His own rest, and His pleasure that His people should share in it. Sin has made Him a Worker for well-nigh six thousand years, but He cherishes the thought of rest for Himself and His people. God would bring us under the influence of His love into sympathy with what He delights in.

I have no doubt that God uses the toil and burden of things here, and even labour and travail in the Lord's interests and service, to develop desires that are in harmony with His own. The young are energetic and think of work, but the older we get the more we cherish the thought of rest. Read J.N.D.'s hymns, and see how often the thought of *rest* comes in! His desires were formed in harmony with God's.

The weekly sabbath was continually saying to the people that God delighted in rest, and in having His people in rest before Him. And the sabbatical year said the same thing in a larger and more impressive way. "A sabbath of rest for the land, a sabbath to Jehovah ... a year of rest shall it be for the land". We may be sure that God would not reiterate the sabbath thought so frequently if it had not a great place in His own mind. He has cherished all through the thought of that blessed time when He "will rest in his love" (Zephaniah 3: 17). He was ever saying, as it were, "My great thought is that you should share my rest, and enjoy my love in that rest". A toil-less year of rest would yield abundant food (verses 6, 7); instead of losing by keeping the sabbatical year, they would only the more prove the wealth of the land. It was a whole year undisturbed by toil — no sowing the field, no pruning the vineyard, no reaping even what sprang up from scattered seed, no gathering of grapes even from undressed vines! Nothing to do but to enjoy in restful obedience that which love had freely given!

The great pleasure of God is that we should be restful, and enjoy what He has given us in His great love. He would have us near to Him to know what He values, and to be in the light and gain of His rest in Christ. The people went

into captivity for seventy years because the land had not "enjoyed its Sabbaths" (2 Chronicles 36: 21); and if we do not keep our sabbaths we shall, sooner or later, fall under the power of what is of man. To enter into God's rest is a greater pleasure to God than any labours of ours could be; it is presented in Scripture as complete blessedness. It will be entered into by Israel in millennial conditions; it is anticipated in spirit by those who believe (Hebrews 4: 3), who enter into that which will characterize the world to come, when the rest of God will be publicly introduced. The sabbatical year is a typical foreshadowing of that period.

I suppose that the sabbatical year and the "year of release" in Deuteronomy 15 were probably concurrent. In the year of release every creditor remitted his claim. A people whose many transgressions have been forgiven, and their sins blotted out and remembered no more, should not find it difficult to "make a release" even of what might be a just claim. We are to be "compassionate, forgiving one another, so as God also in Christ has forgiven you" (Ephesians 4: 32). People say sometimes, "But I want righteousness!" Well, righteousness at the present time is to act toward others on the same principle as God has acted toward us. We see this in Matthew 18: 21 - 35. As to what may be personally due to us let us not hold anything in our hearts against one another. Let us "make a release", let us "relax" our hand. "He shall not demand it of his neighbour, or of his brother; for a release to Jehovah hath been proclaimed" (Deuteronomy 15: 2). It is a "release to Jehovah"! It is a little opportunity to show to the blessed God that we appreciate His wondrous forgiving grace, and that we are in the spirit of it towards our neighbour and brother.

Then after "seven sabbaths of years, seven times seven years ... shalt thou cause the loud sound of the trumpet to go forth in the seventh month, on the tenth of the month; on the day of atonement shall ye cause the trumpet to go forth throughout your land" (verses 8, 9). The "year of jubilee" speaks of liberty, and the restoration in pure grace and sovereign mercy — based on atonement — of all that has been forfeited by Israel. It looks on to that day of restoration when "the great trumpet shall be blown; and they shall come that were perishing in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and they shall worship Jehovah in the holy mountain at Jerusalem" (Isaiah 27: 13).

"And ye shall return every man unto his possession,

and ye shall return every man unto his family" (verse 10). This supposes that the possession has been forfeited, that the people on their side have lost their inheritance. But God says, so to speak, "I will have the last word; I will not

give up the thoughts of my love; every man shall return to his possession". What a comfort to know that God will have the last word in relation to Israel! After all their unbelief, unfaithfulness, and rebellion He will in sovereign mercy cause the trumpet of jubilee to sound, and they will return to their possession. They will come into their inheritance on the footing of atonement and of Christ. I do not suppose that any of them will be able to prove their genealogical title. They will have to get their title from Christ, who as the heavenly Priest has the Urim and Thummim (Nehemiah 7: 64, 65). Israel's title and genealogy are preserved in the breast-plate of that glorious Priest who has never forgotten them, though they have at present no thought of Him.

And if God will have the last word in relation to Israel, we may be sure He will have the last word in relation to saints of the assembly, and to every other family of the redeemed. How much was given to the assembly! It was set up in all the blessedness of the love of God, known by the Holy Spirit. It was enriched with the unsearchable riches of the Christ — the glorious Head in heaven. It was blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ.

A long history of failure has come in, but it has not changed God's thoughts, or the purposes of His love, and He will eventually bring His saints into all that He has purposed for them in Christ. At the rapture He will place them all in the everlasting possession and enjoyment of what His love has given to them in Christ. A trumpet is very soon to sound which will "in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye", introduce the saints into "the glory of the children of God". The dead raised incorruptible, the living changed, and both caught up together in spiritual and glorified bodies to meet the Lord in the air, and to be ever with Him. 1 Corinthians 15: 51, 52; 1 Thessalonians 4: 15 - 18. It is delightful to think of the saints being actually introduced by divine power in an incorruptible condition into all that divine love has purposed for them. The full possession and enjoyment of their incorruptible and undefiled and unfading heavenly inheritance will then be theirs, never to be alienated.

"The anxious looking out of the creature expects the revelation of the sons of God ... the creature itself also shall be set free from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God" (Romans 8: 19 - 21). The sons of God will be revealed in company with the Firstborn, and the creature will be freed from bondage, and brought into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. What a jubilee will that be! What a triumphant last word on God's part after all the unfaithfulness of men! The assembly glorified in its heavenly portion, Israel reinstated on earth in the land of her possession, and the whole creation liberated from thralldom, and set in the value of reconciliation! And all this brought about purely by divine mercy and grace on

the basis of atonement, and by a power that gives effect to all the purposes of God.

No question is raised at the jubilee as to how a man came into bondage and lost his possession. The past, with all its sorrowful history of failure, is blotted out; the day of atonement meets it all; and the exercises of the people on that day justify God, and prepare them for blessing which is wholly of God. It will be so with Israel: it will be so with saints of the present period. *They* lost the land of their possession by unfaithfulness. And how many saints of the assembly are practically not in possession and enjoyment of their blessings in the heavenlies! Indeed it may be said that the church, as a whole, has sold its heavenly possession for earthly things. But the assembling shout of the descending Lord, with archangel's voice and trump of God, will place the heavenly saints in complete and everlasting possession of their inheritance; while shortly afterwards the trumpet of jubilee will sound for the reinstatement of Israel. But this chapter suggests to us the possibility also of returning to our possession even before the jubilee, as we shall see presently.

A section comes in here which has a very practical bearing. Buying and selling were to be according to the nearness or remoteness of the jubilee (verses 14 - 16). Our estimation of the value of things will show pretty accurately whether we regard the jubilee as near or distant. There are "sufferings of this present time", but they "are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us" (Romans 8: 18). The jubilee was not distant to Paul's heart when he spoke of his affliction as "momentary and light"; the "eternal weight of glory" was near — the things not seen (2 Corinthians 4: 17, 18). He took a light estimate of the affliction because the glory was near! And as to earthly advantages — the acquisition of wealth, position, name — what would they all be to us if we were momentarily expecting to hear the assembling shout of our Lord? Alas! I am afraid we often say in our hearts, if not with our lips, "My Lord delayeth His coming". The Lord said, "I come *quickly*". Did He not know that nearly two thousand years would elapse? Yes, He did, but He said, "quickly" because it was going to be near His heart all the time, and He wanted it to be near ours.

During a great part of the last century there was much ministry about the coming of the Lord; it occupied the attention of saints very largely; and the novelty of the teaching awakened a more or less deep interest in thousands. Now the freshness attaching to a newly recovered truth has passed; we no longer need pamphlets or addresses to enlighten us as to the truth of the Lord's coming; it is an accepted teaching with us. But there is now the danger of accepting and holding the truth without being much practically affected by

it. How does it affect our practical outlook? Are we estimating the value of things here in relation to the jubilee? Whether it be sufferings or advantages, are we soberly taking account of them in view of the nearness of the rapture, and of "the times of the restoring of all things, of which God has spoken by the mouth of his holy prophets since time began"? (Acts 3: 21).

It has often been pointed out that there is an analogy between the seven weeks ending in Pentecost (Leviticus 23: 15) and the seven times seven years followed by the year of Jubilee. Pentecost brought to light that which is "first-fruits", in the power of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, of the great result for God in the world to come. But the year of Jubilee is typical of the complete restoration of Israel — "liberty in the land unto all the inhabitants thereof" — when their fulness will be the world's wealth in a way far surpassing what their fall and loss have been (Romans 11: 12 - 15). Pentecost was the fiftieth day, and it was "the morning after the seventh Sabbath". It was the beginning of a new period, when all the promises of God were known as substantiated in a risen and glorified Christ, and the Holy Spirit was here to be the power of witness to Him. The jubilee is the fiftieth year, and it will bring in the fulfilment of all the promises by the "times of refreshing" coming from the presence of the Lord. It answers to "the fulness of times" in Ephesians 1: 10. "The acceptable year of the Lord" was preached by the Son of God (Luke 4: 19), and it was made known here spiritually in the testimony of the Holy Spirit who came down at Pentecost, but it will be introduced *actually* when the Lord comes again.

I think the fiftieth day in each case indicates that a new element is brought in as connected with the ways of God on the earth, but not exactly forming part of those ways. The presence of a glorified Christ in heaven was plainly spoken of in the Old Testament (Psalm 68: 18; Psalm 110: 1), and such a wondrous fact brought in a new character of blessing and testimony. The Holy Spirit came down to make good in men the influence of what was established in a glorified Man in heaven, and thus the Pentecostal "first-fruits" were brought forth. The Messiah glorified in heaven was a new starting point for all blessing. All the promises were confirmed and established, not by being fulfilled in the ways of God on earth, but by being substantiated in the Person of Christ as a risen and glorified Man in heaven.

And the jubilee is "the fiftieth year". I think it indicates that the consummation of the divine ways on earth will come about as a result of divine actings which are additional to those ways. The sons of God — the joint-heirs with Christ — have been called during this wondrous interval between the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost and the calling up of the heavenly saints at the rapture. A

company has been called and secured for a place in heaven according to eternal counsels of love — a company of many brethren predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's glorified Son, that He may be the Firstborn among them. This is outside the weeks of earth; it is above and beyond the Sabbath periods, which always refer, I believe, to God's works and ways on earth, and their consummation in the introduction of His rest in millennial blessedness. But that consummation will be connected with the shining forth of the glory of a heavenly Christ, and with the revelation of the sons of God who have been called to have a place in heaven with Him. This will give a peculiar character to the liberty into which "the creature" — that is, everything connected with this creation which now groans under the bondage of corruption — will be brought. It is "the liberty of the glory of the children of God". So that there is not only the intensified perfection of the "seven sabbaths of years, seven times seven years; so that the days of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty-nine years". That would suggest the winding up in perfect rest of the ways of God with man on the earth. But there is a "fiftieth year", which suggests that the earth will also partake in the wondrous gain which will come to creation through the shining forth of that company of sons who are the fruit of the eternal purpose of God's love, and who have their place in heavenly glory outside God's ways with the earth. So that the liberated creation will not only have the fulfilment of all the Old Testament promises, which bring in sabbath conditions where the vanity, bondage, and groaning and travailing in pain have been. But they will enjoy those conditions in the light of "the revelation of the sons of God". The shining forth of the heavenly families will give an additional glory to the scene, and will give character to the liberty which pervades it. I think this is suggested by the fact that the jubilee is "the fiftieth year".

The Old Testament contains hints of the blessed fact that God intended to bring the earth under the influence of what He established in heaven. Daniel 7: 22 speaks of the Ancient of days coming, and judgment being given "to the saints of the most high places" — clearly the heavenly saints. And the New Testament tells us that "the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matthew 13: 43). And that "at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven ... he shall have come to be glorified in his saints, and wondered at in all that have believed" (2 Thessalonians 1: 10). The place which the heavenly saints have in the kingdom is thus a most important feature of it. Their calling and heavenly place are something additional to God's ways with the earth, but not unconnected with those ways, as it is the revelation of the heavenly sons which will give character to the restoration and liberty of earth's jubilee. My impression is that this is intimated in "the fiftieth

year". It will secure not only Israel's blessing, but the emancipation of the whole creation.

It will mean the undoing of all that has come in by sin and Satan's power.

Jehovah says, "And the land shall not be sold forever; for the land is mine". It is *His* land. The people may refuse "the waters of Shiloah which flow softly" (Shiloah means "sending forth"; it probably refers to the prophetic word of promise in regard to Christ); and they may rejoice in "Rezin and in the son of Remaliah" — kings of Syria and Israel — and in divine judgment the Assyrian may come and over-flow the land, but it is still "thy land, O Emmanuel" (Isaiah 8: 5 - 8). The Turks have had it for centuries, the British have it now, but it is still Emmanuel's land. He will not enjoy His land until His people enjoy it. I think this must be the force of "ye are strangers and sojourners with me" (Leviticus 25: 23). When Emmanuel came in He had no possession in the land that was His; He was the true Stranger and Sojourner; He had not where to lay His head. He came in to be with a disinherited remnant, and to have them with Him. He was Emmanuel — God with us. He was with repentant ones, with those who were poor in spirit, mourners, meek, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peace-makers, those persecuted on account of righteousness. In view of the redemption of the purchased possession it is important to see the kind of heirs that can take it up. It is a people of this kind who are the children God has given Him. "Emmanuel" speaks of the grace in which He was *with them*, but "*with me*" speaks of their great and peculiar privilege — though having lost possession of the land — of being *with Him*, and sharing His Strangership.

Does it not touch our hearts to think that the One who is entitled to everything here — the One who can say, "The land is mine", and who in claiming that land claims the right to dispose of the earth as He will — is a Stranger and Sojourner? He is not in possession of His rights here, so the place of the joint-heirs is to be "strangers and sojourners" with Him. Peter addresses the people of God in this character (1 Peter 1: 1; 1 Peter 2: 11). It has ever been faith's place here, and ever will be until Emmanuel takes up His rights in the true year of jubilee. We "have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the earnest of our inheritance" — and that a heavenly one — but as to our place on earth we are "strangers and sojourners".

Verse 25 shows that if one who has sold his possession has a wealthy kinsman he may have it redeemed, and may return to it before the jubilee. This is very interesting, for it sets forth what is available at the present time. Israel grew poor and sold his possession. A blessed Kinsman came in with the right of redemption; but Israel — save a small remnant — spurned the Kinsman-

redeemer, and lost his golden opportunity. He will have to wait now until the jubilee to return to his possession. But in the meantime the remnant who received the Messiah got a better inheritance — a heavenly one — in association with Him. And a day is coming when the remnant, as having forfeited all right to the promises, and therefore typified by Ruth the Moabitess, will cast herself upon the grace of Christ as the true Boaz — the “mighty man of wealth” — and will learn what a Redeemer He is.

Many a Christian today has practically sold his possession. He has become spiritually impoverished, and got his mind on “the things that are on the earth”. He has sold his possession at a very low price, for he has given up the spiritual and the heavenly for a bit of the world or the earth. It may be that “there was a famine in the land”! For some reason in the government of God there was a shortage of spiritual food, and the believer went to sojourn “in the fields of Moab”, only to be disciplined there, and to find that all turns to bitterness. But then there comes a gracious report “how that Jehovah had visited his people to give them bread”, and a desire is awakened to return. Is there any means of being restored to his possession now, or must he wait for that assembling shout which will be, in a certain way, our jubilee? Thank God! there is still a Boaz for every returning Naomi and Ruth — a Kinsman who can redeem what has been forfeited or sold! Our Kinsman loves us, and it lies in His ability to secure for us now a return to the full possession and enjoyment of our spiritual and God-given possession. He is the “mighty man of wealth” in Bethlehem (the house of bread) before He is King in Zion. “In him is strength” to reinstate an impoverished one in possession of an inheritance which has been sold. This speaks not of the original gift of divine love, but of the peculiar strength of that love in granting recovery and restoration when that gift has been departed from. If there is a desire to return on the part of one who is conscious of having got away, grace would encourage that one to come back and lay down at the feet of the true Boaz. Put yourself absolutely in His hands. He will spread His wing over you, and secure all for you, though you may be conscious that you have no title to anything. The only claim you have is that which *grace* gives. The grace of the jubilee can be known beforehand in the Kinsman-Redeemer. We are “not left ... this day without one that has the right of redemption”. He can reinstate even one who has sold his possession! What precious grace! The Book of Ruth brings Christ before us in this blessed character.

The whole character of the Lord’s ways with saints of the assembly at the present moment is one of recovery, and restoration of lost privilege. The saints are soon going to be translated, but in the meantime a great spiritual revival is going on. The presence of the Holy Spirit — so long practically ignored — is

being recognized by many. The affections of the saints are being stirred up to hold the Head, and to love one another, and to reach after the possession and enjoyment of what is spiritual and heavenly. In this way they are returning to their possession in anticipation of that moment when they will be actually with Christ in the heavenlies.

If one sold a "dwelling house in a walled city" there was a limited period during which the seller had the right of redemption; if he did not exercise that right he lost it for ever. It was a warning to the Jew that there was something which he might lose for ever — which not even the jubilee would restore to him. "The fields of the country" would speak, I think, of earthly blessing; but the "walled city" speaks of what is enclosed. It speaks of a community with its own exclusive privileges. A "walled city" has a distinctive character and collective life of its own, with a definite separation from all that surrounds it. It typifies the place which the assembly has here. God gave the Jew an opportunity to have a house in that "walled city", but he sold his dwelling, and he did not redeem it within the "full year". The book of the Acts shows us, I think, the "full year" during which the dwelling might have been redeemed, and then it passed into the hand of the Gentile.

Have we "bought" a dwelling in that "walled city"? It costs something to have a dwelling in that city, but it is worth more than all it costs. We are tested as to whether we prefer earthly things — "the fields of the country" — or a dwelling in the "walled city". In the assembly viewed as the "walled city" everything is made of Christ; nothing else has any importance or standing; its walls exclude all that is of man after the flesh. His wisdom, his righteousness, his religion, every part of his glory are outside its walls. That city stands in holy separation from the world, and from all that is earthly in a religious way.

It is good to see that "the Levites shall have a perpetual right of redemption" (verse 32). The Levites had cities, but they had no inheritance among the children of Israel (Numbers 18: 23); they typify "the assembly of the firstborn ones who are enregistered in heaven" (Hebrews 12: 23). The portion of a heavenly people can never be alienated; it is "a perpetual possession". "The field of the suburbs of their cities shall not be sold". God will secure to us as much of earthly mercy as we need so long as we are here, but the place we hold here is that of a people whose inheritance is a heavenly one.

Then we have the thought of a brother grown poor, and "fallen into decay" (verse 35), or even "sold unto thee" (verse 39), or sold unto a wealthy stranger (verse 47). The whole chapter contemplates in different forms a reduced and impoverished state — a state in which the original wealth of the inheritance has been forfeited. But it is full of the spirit of grace. The poor

brother is to be cared for, the one sold is not to be treated as a bondservant, and if sold to a wealthy stranger there is still to be "right of redemption for him", and full liberty in the year of jubilee. Jehovah says, "They are my bondmen". It is as much as to say, You must be considerate for them because they are mine. How touching the grace of it! Does it not teach us tender and gracious consideration for those who belong to God, however impoverished and decayed they may be? There is perhaps with us a tendency not to care enough for those who do not get on spiritually. We feel it is their own fault that they have "fallen into decay", and this may be true; but do they belong to God? If so, they are to be cared for. It is due to God that they should be the subjects of considerate and kindly interest.

Thus chapter magnifies the grace that deals wondrously with those who have, on their side, lost their possessions. The whole chapter is coloured by the grace of the jubilee. God will have the last word. Whatever happens on our side, His unfailing grace will assert itself, and every one will return to his possession. When the trumpet of jubilee sounds the power of sovereign divine love will place the heirs in possession and enjoyment of the inheritance. It will be known then that "of him, and through him, and for him are all things: to him be glory for ever. Amen".

LEVITICUS 26

Leviticus 26

Chapter 25 is a wonderful unfolding of *grace* which restores to the people of God's election all that has been forfeited or unworthily surrendered. God had the first word with them, and He will have the last. But chapter 26 comes in also, and it sets before us God's ways in *government*. It is a continual exercise to hold these two great principles of the divine ways in their full weight and power without allowing the one to enfeeble the other. We shall see that both combine to reach the same end. For God's governmental ways issue in His people accepting the punishment of their iniquity, and confessing their unfaithfulness. Then He remembers His covenant and His land (verses 40 - 45). Both His grace and His government will result in His people enjoying all that His heart delights to give them, and being suitable to enjoy it.

It is a great thing to be brought consciously to God as revealed in grace in His beloved Son. God began with us in grace, and grace begun will end in glory. But He would have us to be kept in sobriety and godly fear as knowing also that we are the subjects of His government. God would have this ever to be a happy thought to us, because if we keep His commandments His government ensures that we shall be recompensed in the fullest way. See verses 3 - 13. It pays well, if we may be allowed to use such an expression, to walk in obedience and faithfulness. God has set "glory and honour and incorruptibility" before us in our Lord Jesus Christ, a living Man out of death; and if, "in patient continuance of good works", we seek for those things He will render to us life eternal. There is "glory and honour and peace to every one that works good" (Romans 2: 6 - 11). "If, by the Spirit, ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Romans 8: 13). "Whatever a man shall sow, that also shall he reap ... he that sows to the Spirit, from the Spirit shall reap eternal life" (Galatians 6: 7, 8). This is the good news of the government of God. We are apt to think of the government of God as always operating against what is wrong, and not to think sufficiently of how it operates to bring in spiritual gain when we move according to the Spirit. It is our privilege to reach God's end in a happy way, and to have continual prosperity because our course is such that God's government is always in our favour. Part of the blessedness that we have come to is "God the judge of all". He is taking account of every bit of response to His love, of desire to follow Christ, of purpose to walk in the Spirit, every manifestation of love to His people, every wish to contribute to their edification. He will in His government seal to us the fruit of every spiritual movement of this kind.

God is concerned most about the state of our hearts with reference to Him. Hebrews 12 tells us that He is "the Father of spirits"; He is concerned about our spirits. What He looked for in Israel was that they should have no idols, and that they should observe His sabbaths, and reverence His sanctuary (verses 1, 2). These things tested the people as to the place Jehovah had in their hearts, and they still test us individually and collectively. Is God the supreme Object to us, as revealed in Christ, or have we other objects which practically control us and displace Him? I would not like to impoverish my soul by falling under the power of an idol. Do we love to answer to the thoughts of God's heart, and value the opportunity of being restful with Him? And do we reverence His sanctuary? God would have the whole divine system which was set forth in the tabernacle revered in our affections. If people go into a religious building they take off their hats; they reverence the material structure. But God would have us to reverence His sanctuary in a spiritual sense. The sanctuary is the whole order of things which takes character from the holiest, and from God dwelling there; it is "the abode of his holiness".

There are infinitely great blessings which come in according to this chapter, on the line of God's government. "Rain in the season thereof, and the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, etc". There is peace, victory, God's face is towards His people, He sets His habitation among them. "I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be to me a people". This scripture is quoted in 2 Corinthians 6: 16 to induce the Corinthians to come out and be separate from the idolatrous and unbelieving. God loves to set His tabernacle among His people, and to dwell there restfully, but this demands holy and spiritual conditions. Then "I will walk among you", indicates that divine movements are found among the people of God. The assembly is "the assembly of the living God"; it is the place where His movements and activities are known. He overrules and controls the affairs of nations in the world, but what we see there are the movements of men. It is only amongst His separate and obedient people that the movements of God are known; it is there He walks.

But if His people do not hearken to Him, or do His commandments, His government becomes adverse to them. See verses 14 - 39. There is a solemn contrast between the sabbatic sevens in chapter 25 and the four-times repeated "sevenfold" in chapter 26. Yet even in this we see the patience and persistence of God. He moves deliberately from one stage of corrective discipline to another until He reaches His end. There are five distinct stages of correction in these verses. He will have the last word in His government as well as in His grace, and a refusal to hearken on the part of His people only prolongs and intensifies His correction. All that He so faithfully forewarned

Israel of in this chapter has come to pass. They have now perished among the nations, and the land of their enemies has eaten them up (verse 38). But He will yet reach the end of His ways in government with them. They will yet confess their iniquity, and their uncircumcised heart will be humbled, and Jehovah will remember His covenant with Jacob (verses 40 - 42). Jacob is put first here because in Jacob we see God's disciplinary ways and their result. The book of Job is typical of how God will reach His end with His people Israel through prolonged and painful discipline. They will be brought in the end to abhor themselves, and to glory in the fact that they know God, and that His covenant is the security of all blessing for them.

If we "walk contrary" to God we shall find that His government is contrary to us, and the longer we persist in self-will the more severe will the operation of that government become. But we may be sure that God will overcome in a conflict between our wills and His; He will reach His end, though it may be through much suffering to us which might have been avoided. The sooner we submit, and humble our uncircumcised hearts, the better it will be for us. Confession, the acceptance of God's ways in righteous government, and turning to Him, lead to recovery. God remembers the covenant, and can righteously bestow on a repentant and humbled people its wealth of blessing.

The spiritual famine in a great part of the christian profession today, the way the world has dominion, the superstition and infidelity which threaten to sweep away the last remnants of faith, so that Christendom is well-nigh ready to open its doors to the strong delusion and to utterly apostatise, are solemn evidences of how men have walked contrary to God in the christian dispensation, even as Israel did in hers, and of how they suffer now under His government. That government is going on, as yet, in view of repentance and recovery. Whenever and wherever an uncircumcised heart is humbled, and confession is made, there is nothing on God's part to hinder a return to the original ground of all blessing. *Christ* is the Covenant, and He is the God-given Title to blessing. God never forgets Christ, and where there is self-judgment, and turning to Him, He delights to bless according to all that Christ is. He is available for every one in the christian profession today, even as He will be for Israel in the day when they will be brought under God's government, and by His gracious working in them, to say, "Blessed is he that comes in the name of Jehovah"!

LEVITICUS 27

Leviticus 27

This chapter deals with what is devoted or hallowed to Jehovah by His people. It concerns the spontaneous fruit of divine grace, maturing in a willing-hearted people. It is an attractive subject to those who love God.

Hannah's prayer (1 Samuel 1: 11) was the prayer of a devoted heart. Such prayers do not fail of an answer. She prayed for "a man child", not to have the gain of him for herself, but that she might "give him to Jehovah all the days of his life". She devoted him by a vow in a day when the priesthood was feeble and undiscerning in Eli, and corrupt in his sons, and the kingdom was shortly to be introduced. I think that we may say that Jehovah, and Israel too, got the value of that vow. The prophetic word came in by Samuel, and the way for the setting up of the kingdom was prepared. There is much in common between Hannah's day and our own.

We are called upon to yield ourselves "to God as alive from among the dead, and your members instruments of righteousness to God" (Romans 6: 13). We are privileged to present our "bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your intelligent service" (Romans 12: 1). If we have not yielded ourselves to God we are not yet in normal Christian relations with Him. Paul says of the assemblies of Macedonia that "they gave themselves first to the Lord, and to us by God's will" (2 Corinthians 8: 5). That is the starting point of what is for God — a self-dedication which has definite spiritual value.

But this chapter teaches us that there is a graduated scale of spiritual value even in what is devoted. All devotedness is not alike. It may be feeble and immature, as seen "from a month old even unto five years old"; it may be growing up in increasing strength, as typified "from five years old even unto twenty years old"; it may be in the maturity of full growth "from twenty years old even unto sixty"; it may be of "male" or "female" character — a greater or less measure of active energy; or it may, alas! be weakening or decrepit, as "from sixty years old and above".

There is such a thing as spiritual growth, and no doubt John's three grades of babes, young men, and fathers would correspond with the three different ages here with their increasing "valuation". "From sixty years old and above" is a sorrowful picture of decline. It is very sad when a man's spiritual value drops, but it is by no means an uncommon case. Look at Ephesus! There was, perhaps, the highest possible spiritual value there at one time, but Revelation 2 shows how terribly it dropped. It should be a constant exercise with us to be

on the line of increase rather than diminution. There is no reason on the divine side why we should ever get above "sixty" in a spiritual sense. Decline is not inevitable. Moses' eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated, at one hundred and twenty (Deuteronomy 34: 7); Caleb was as good a warrior at eighty-five as he was at forty (Joshua 14: 7, 10). Paul, John, and Peter never dropped in the scale of spiritual value; and some of us have known what it was to be in contact with men and women whose spiritual value did not drop to the very end of their course. What encouragement there is in this!

The valuation of Moses would typify the Lord's estimate of our true spiritual value: that is, of what we really are by divine grace. There is often a great disparity between our natural age and our spiritual growth. It does not follow that because I have been breaking bread forty or fifty years I am full grown. I may be spiritually under "five"! But even in that case I have a definite spiritual value, and my happiness will very largely depend on my answering to it in true devotedness. The Lord does not value us by our natural abilities or mental powers or acquirements; He values us according to what we are by the grace of God. Paul could say, "By God's grace I am what I am" (1 Corinthians 15: 10), and every truly converted person can say that. What we are by God's grace is the measure of our spiritual value, and the Lord takes account of it; He makes no mistakes in His "valuation". Many persons may overvalue me, and some may undervalue me, but my comfort is that the Lord does neither. He knows exactly my true age spiritually, and values me accordingly. Now I want to answer to that so that God may get the full value of it from me. If people overvalue me they only put me in a false position, for I cannot yield fifty shekels if I am only worth twenty! If they undervalue me they rob themselves of some of the gain which they might derive from me through grace. It is safer *for me* to be undervalued, but if my brethren were to undervalue me — which they do not — *they* would be the losers! How much the blessed Lord Himself was undervalued! They weighed for Him thirty silver pieces — "a goodly price that I was prized at by them". Jehovah says, "Cast it unto the potter". He absolutely repudiates their valuation. "Chosen of God and precious", "a name, that which is above every name", "crowned with glory and honour", and all heaven filled with worshipping myriads, tell God's valuation of Christ!

Each of us has to be exercised that God gets the full value of what we are by His grace. None of us need wish to be somebody else, but we have to see to it that we come up to the measure of the grace, or faith, or gift which God has bestowed upon us. The question is, Are we devoted to God according to the "valuation" which the Lord has made of us?

As to service we find the Lord giving talents "to each according to his particular ability" (Matthew 25: 15). He estimated the value of each for service. But what we have before us in Leviticus 27 lies behind that; it is a question of our value in devotedness of heart. If that is there as a basis God can confer gift. I am sure if there were more devotedness there would be more gift; for gift comes in answer to desire (1 Corinthians 12: 31; 1 Corinthians 14: 1). It is probable, too, that there is already much gift, and God-given ability, amongst Christians which does not come into activity because devotedness is not sufficiently energetic. I am convinced that God would have us more exercised to grow in devotedness, so that our spiritual "valuation" might increase. Romans 16 is a beautiful illustration of spiritual valuation. Paul does not lump together all those mentioned; he has something different to say of almost each one.

Leviticus is a book of wonderful grace; grace comes in at unexpected places; and there is a beautiful touch of it here in relation to the man who is "poorer than thy valuation" (verse 8). Every Israelite ought to have been able to answer to the valuation of Moses. To be poor in Israel would indicate some failure to utilize the wealth of the land. But, notwithstanding this, there is a compassionate consideration of the actual means of one who is poorer than the valuation. He is not deprived of all opportunity to be devoted. "He shall present himself before the priest, and the priest shall value him: according to his means that vowed shall the priest value him". The priest valued a poor man, not according to what he ought to pay, but according to his actual means. His devotedness was accepted, through priestly grace, even though its value was not so great as it might have been, or ought to have been. I have no doubt there are many who, from different causes, are actually "poorer" than they ought to be. But if this is owned compassionate priestly grace is available, and a measure of devotedness may be accepted as being what is within the "means" of the poor person. These things are very touching; they magnify the grace of our God, and give us to know Him better.

If you are conscious that you are poorer than the "valuation", go to the Priest. You will find priestly grace that estimates the devotedness of which you are capable, and it is permitted to you to be as devoted as you are spiritually able to be. Many a young believer has prayed earnestly that he might be wholly for the Lord. I suppose that we have all done so at some time or other. There was devotedness in that; but we may not have fully followed it up. Through unwatchfulness and lack of spiritual diligence we may find that practically we have not "means" to carry out what we desired and intended. We have fallen off in earnestness, and divine resources have been neglected, or but partially utilized. Let us go to the Priest in true exercise of heart; He will value us

according to our actual means at the moment, and there will be something really for God, and accepted by Him. But then in honouring God according to our means we shall come in for great spiritual gain according to Proverbs 3: 9, 10, and our "means" will rapidly increase. So that one who really judged his past slackness and want of purpose, and had to do with Christ about it, would find his "means" increase, and if spiritual diligence were maintained he would come up to his true spiritual valuation. It is a comfort to know that the Lord makes the best of what is there. We see that in the epistles to the seven assemblies; He puts the full value on what is there, though He calls attention to the deficiency. But then when there is true exercise He makes divine resources available in Himself and in the Spirit, and the deficiency is made up.

The Lord as Man here was fully devoted to God; the vows of God were upon Him. But He was absolutely cast upon God for those resources of divine strength by which alone devotedness could be preserved and carried through. He set Jehovah always before Him, and was never diverted a hair's-breadth. He was always in the spirit of "Preserve me, O God: for I trust in thee" (Psalm 16: 1). We can only be devoted as we follow Him in that path of prayerful dependence, divinely strengthened and maintained. There are wonderful "means" available for us — Christ and the Spirit and all divine resources. We may have neglected to draw upon our resources, and therefore our "means" in a practical sense may be reduced, but the deficiency can be supplied. Let us not forget the Priest in all His compassion and consideration. I have often been touched by the grace which He has shown to me, when I have had to own that I was poorer than the "valuation". And I have seen His grace to others who have felt in the later years of their lives ashamed that they had not been more devoted. The enemy might use the consciousness of this to cast us down. But the grace of Christ is wonderful, and were there is an upright acknowledgment, and a true turning to Him, He can secure to the heart what it desires in the way of devotedness.

"And if it be a beast whereof men bring an offering unto Jehovah, all that they give of such unto Jehovah shall be holy" (verse 9). This would, I think, typify an apprehension of Christ as held by the heart of the believer in true devotedness to God. There is no "valuation" here, for it is the preciousness of Christ Himself that is set forth in such a beast. It is not to be altered or changed. The purpose of heart which devoted what it apprehended of Christ to the pleasure of God is to stand. Even another, and perhaps a better, apprehension of Christ cannot be substituted for it, though it may be added to it. Each apprehension of Christ that is devoted is "holy", and it is so pleasurable to God that He will not forego it. This shows how God values every movement of devotedness in the hearts of His people in relation to their

apprehensions of Christ. What has been devoted to Him cannot be recalled, but this is because of the pleasure God has in retaining it for Himself. It is really a lovely touch of grace. He says, as it were, You may add a better beast if you can, and if your heart prompts you to do so, but I value your first movement of devotion too much to allow anything to be substituted for it.

An "unclean beast, of which they do not bring an offering unto Jehovah" (verse 11), would, I think, apply to anything which had not "holy" character which might be surrendered in devotedness to God. Not something sinful, but something on the line of the natural. This must be valued by the priest because it expresses a heart-movement which yields something definitely for God. That yield may be more or less; all surrenders have not the same value. The Priest knows exactly how to appraise all such devoted things. Many have made surrenders which all could see — giving up earthly prospects and advantages, and comforts and family ties, to serve the Lord. Others have made surrenders for the Lord's sake only known to themselves and to Him. All such surrenders are appraised by the Priest. There may have been mixed motives in some of them which have diminished their value, but the Priest takes account of their true worth God-ward. There are no mistakes in His valuation. "According to the valuation of the priest, so shall it be".

In this case the thought of redeeming the devoted beast is brought in. "And if they will in any wise redeem it, then they shall add a fifth part thereof unto thy valuation" (verse 13). Probably the thought of redemption looks on to the future. The spirit of devotedness in the day when the Messiah is in reproach and rejection leads to surrender, as the Lord so plainly intimated in the Gospels. But in a coming day Israel will take up on redemption ground what the faithful remnant surrendered in their devotedness, and they will so hold these things in relation to Jehovah that He will get His added "fifth".

The hallowing of a "house" would speak of devotedness coming out in relation to the conditions in which God's people dwell together. We have seen "a leprous plague in a house" in chapter 14, but here we have the thought of a hallowed house. I suppose every believer has some idea that there is a "house" character of things; that is, that Christians have the privilege of being together. Generally speaking they *do* get together in some way, but the question is raised here of the value of the "house". It may be a "good" house or a "bad" one, and its value will be correspondingly high or low as an expression of devotedness. The Priest does not value an unhallowed house. There may be associations in which there is no element of devotedness — of being "holy to Jehovah". This scripture does not concern such associations, and one would trust that no true saint would wish his "house" conditions to

have that character. But if there is a true desire that the "house" should be hallowed it becomes a serious exercise to know what value Christ puts upon it. *How much* devotedness does it really express? *How much* spiritual value is there in it? The Priest makes no mistake. Let us not be content without getting His valuation of our "house".

The one who hallowed the house could have it for his own by paying the price of redemption. This suggests that to dwell in a hallowed "house" costs something! When it came home to the people of God that a great corrupt profession united with the world was no suited "house" for them, and they sought to have a "house" which could be held as truly hallowed, they had to pay the price. Every hallowed "house" costs something if it is to be possessed in a divine way. The greater the spiritual value of the "house" — the more true devotedness it expresses — the more it costs to secure it as our own.

God has given great light in these last days as to the "house" conditions in which He would have His people to dwell. Many have been enlightened as to assembly truth and principles. We cannot plead lack of light as an excuse for the "house" being "bad", for in the grace of the Lord, and by the Holy Spirit, there has been a great opening up from scripture of the spiritual conditions that make the house "good". We have to see that those conditions get place with us in a practical way, and that they are maintained in a spirit of true devotedness. Our "house" should be a hallowed one, and we should be prepared to pay the price so that we may hold it as having made it our own. I have no doubt there has often been great devotedness with little light; the Priest knows how to value it aright. It is for us to see that with much light we do not fail in devotedness.

The hallowed "field" (verses 16 - 21) would refer, I believe, to Israel's portion on earth, which he failed to "redeem", and to which he has lost all title. It has reverted to Jehovah and to the Priest. Israel has no longer any claim or right to the land. They will inherit, but it will be through the blessed Priest whom they have so long despised and rejected, and through Jehovah's sovereign mercy under new covenant conditions. It will be to them Emmanuel's land, and as a devoted people they will hold it as hallowed, and all that is due to Jehovah will be rendered.

"The firstling" (verse 26) cannot be hallowed, because "it is Jehovah's". "And as to every tithe ... it is Jehovah's" (verse 30). There is that which God claims as His due, and which must be rendered to Him. The voluntary devotion which is set forth in a "vow" is very acceptable to God, but He reminds us in the closing verses of this book that He has definite claims which cannot be righteously ignored. We must all feel how desirable it is that the spirit of

devotedness should be increased in our hearts. But while we think of this let us not forget that there is much which is not left to be suggested by voluntary devotedness, but which is a matter of simple obedience, and of rendering to God and to our Lord Jesus Christ what is due. If we are not faithful in such matters we certainly cannot take the ground of being devoted.