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THE CHURCH'S PART IN THE SIN-OFFERING

"Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow His steps." – 1 Pet. 2:21. R.V.

HUMANITY is imperfect, unsatisfactory to God, condemned to death. In one sense of the word, therefore, it has not merit; for God would not condemn that which has value. In another sense, however, God must perceive something in the fallen race which can be made acceptable to Himself, else He would not have made provision for the redemption of mankind. The very fact that He has provided a Redeemer for the human race is a proof that mankind are not totally depraved, although [R5196 : page 73] there is not a sufficiency of good qualities to make any one of them worthy of everlasting life. But each one has a little merit of his own, and this God intends to preserve and make valuable.

The process of making valuable what little of the original perfection any human being may have retained, is called *justification*. In God's Plan of the Ages, a thousand years are apportioned to the work of bringing mankind up to perfection, so that God can accept them and give them everlasting life. This period is the Millennium. Meantime, during the Gospel Age, a certain class called out from the world have a different provision made for them, by which they are now reckoned perfect through the imputation of the merit of Christ.

Even an unjustified person has some inherent merit. It would seem that the quality which God values most is an *honest heart*. Indeed we may say that one's worthiness is in proportion to his honesty, his *truthfulness*. Whenever an honest-hearted person begins to realize his sinful condition and to long for reconciliation with God, he will find that the Word of God directs all such to look to the Savior of mankind.

The Lord Jesus does not spurn sinners who evince a desire to forsake sin and to approach Him. By their measure of faith and obedience all such are justified to fellowship with Him; as it is written, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." (John 14:6.) He invites sinners to have confidence in Him as a Burden-bearer, saying, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me." – Matt. 11:28,29.

All thus approaching God have a *measure* of peace and justification, but neither in *full*; so they may be said to be *tentatively justified*; that is, justified for a purpose. To all such God says, "If you will believe this message of My grace to the extent that you will consecrate whatever of the original perfection you possess, I will deal with you as if you had the full amount of human perfection. If you by faith will present your body a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1,2), even if that body is not worth more than one-third or one-half the full value of human perfection, nevertheless, I will impute enough of Christ's merit to supply your deficiency. Thus you may be counted as possessing the whole – as if you actually had one hundred per cent. of perfection."

Only during the Gospel Age is this *wonderful offer* made. The amount of merit necessary to bring the believer up to the standard of justification, or righteousness, where he will be acceptable to God, is *exactly in proportion* **[R5196 : page 74]** *to his deficiency*. If the one presenting himself in sacrifice possesses but thirty per cent., our Lord will impute to him seventy per cent. to make up one hundred per cent. which represents perfection. If he has sixty-five or forty-five per cent., there will be imputed thirty-five or fifty-five per cent., as may be required to bring him up to the full standard of righteousness.

In other words, when one enters into a contract that he will lay down his life in sacrifice, our Lord indorses him to the extent of his

inability, or imputes to him enough of His merit to make up his deficiency, that his offering may be acceptable. This deficiency is not made up *actually*, but *reckonedly*, for the purpose of enabling him to present his sacrifice and of permitting Justice to accept it. Our Lord, who now has become the Advocate, makes up to each of the Church what he lacks of being a perfect human being.

THE HOLY SPIRIT THE EVIDENCE OF ACCEPTANCE

Complete peace and justification are obtainable only when the tentatively justified enter into a definite contract, or covenant, with God and present their bodies as living sacrifices. Of each who resolves to do thus, Divine Justice says, "That person is imperfect and therefore incompetent to enter into a contract of this kind; but if the Lord Jesus Christ will indorse him, the contract may be made." "Very well," says the Lord, "I indorse his note. If he does not die voluntarily, according to his agreement, I guarantee that he shall nevertheless die; for I will see that the contract is carried out. If he resists the enforced destruction of his flesh, and thus proves his unworthiness of life, he will go into the Second Death."

As each consecrated believer presents himself for sacrifice, the great Redeemer imputes to him the merit of His own sacrifice, in order to make him acceptable to the Father. After the Father has accepted the offering, He immediately imparts to him the Holy Spirit, by which he is begotten to a new nature. This impartation of the Holy Spirit is the evidence that the sacrifice has been accepted.

Thus the merit of Christ is imputed to every one who presents himself in full consecration during the "acceptable time" – the Gospel Age. Those who offer themselves through the great Redeemer are not, however, accepted in the *full sense* of the word, until they reach the end of the journey of life; for they may fail to make their calling and election sure. Their standing, therefore, is one

of *faith*, not of *works*. Whatever there is of good in them is acceptable to God through the merit of Christ, their Advocate.

The basis of this reconciliation arranged by God is the death of our Lord Jesus Christ as a Ransom – a *corresponding price* – for Adam, who forfeited his life through disobedience. This price our Lord has already placed in the hands of Justice to be applied for the world in due time. Meanwhile this merit, which is to bring Restitution to the world eventually, is now imputed to the Church, to cover our imperfections and shortcomings and thus to permit us to get rid of the earthly nature and to come into the Heavenly nature.

In this transaction our Lord accepts us as New Creatures, members of His Body, and our *flesh* as *His* flesh. Therefore the sacrifice of the flesh of the Church is a continuation of that of His own flesh. As human beings we have to give up our *wills* altogether; and under this arrangement we are henceforth members of His Body. From this standpoint He counts our blood, our death, as a part of His own, and associates us with Him in the glorious promises.

Let us get the thought well established in our minds that while no sacrifice on *our part* is necessary to the salvation of the world, as *all the merit* is in our Lord Jesus, yet according to the Divine Plan, which the Lord is working out, the Church is permitted to share with her Lord in the sacrifices of the present time – not as *individuals*, not in a *personal* sense, but as members of His Body. All the while, however, it is *our Lord's own merit* which makes the Church acceptable.

THE CHURCH'S SHARE IN THE SIN-OFFERING

The question may be asked, What has the *Church* to do with the *Sin-Offering*? We reply that we would not know what part they have if God had not shown us by making a picture in the Atonement Day sacrifices. Israel's Atonement Day prefigured typically the work to be done by The Messiah – the reconciliation of God and

mankind. The Day of Atonement had various features. It began with the sacrifice of a bullock, which typified the offering of the Lord Jesus Christ on behalf of the Church. The blood of the bullock was sprinkled on the Mercy Seat for the priest and his house, typifying the entire Household of Faith.

Then the Household of Faith was represented by two goats. One of these goats went through experiences exactly similar to those of the bullock. This goat represented that class of believers who daily follow in the footsteps of the Lord, who are sharers with Him in His sufferings and who will also partake of the glories to follow. – Rom. 12:1,2; Heb. 13:11-13.

The other goat represented that class of consecrated believers who do not go voluntarily to death, but who, without turning to sin, fail to make a *willing* sacrifice. Therefore this class is treated as the scape-goat and driven into the wilderness condition for tribulation experiences. St. Paul seems to refer to this class when he says that some are thus dealt with that the spirit may be saved in the Day of the Lord Jesus. – I Cor. 5:5.

Because the Scriptures picture the Lord and the Church as the Sin-Offering, therefore we believe it. St. Paul addresses the Church as the antitypical goat class when he says, "The bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the Sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. *Wherefore* Jesus also, that He might *sanctify the people* with *His own blood*, suffered *without the gate*. Let us go forth, therefore, unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." – Heb. 13:11-13.

What beasts were thus treated? Only the *bullock* and the *Lord's goat*. The Apostle plainly states that Jesus was typified by one of these beasts, and urges the Church – the "Us" class – to go forth unto Him without the camp, thus antityping the Lord's goat. Let us then go forth; let us walk in His footsteps, bearing His reproach with

Him; for "if we suffer [with Him] we shall also reign with Him" – shall be glorified together. – 2 Tim. 2:11,12.

THE CHURCH'S SACRIFICE OF EARTHLY RIGHTS

The merit of our Lord's sacrifice resides in the fact that, having maintained His righteous standard throughout His earthly ministry, and having sacrificially given up His life, He has that *right to life* on the human plane at His disposal. That right He has given into the hands of Justice, to constitute the basis of the imputation to the Church of whatever each member may need to make up for his deficiency. As soon as the Church has completed her sacrifice, and has passed beyond the veil, this merit will be released for application on behalf of the world.

The *Church's part* in the *Sin-Offering*, therefore, is that she receives, as a reward for her faith and obedience, the *privilege* of *sacrificing with her Lord*. Her share is thus accomplished when she presents herself a living sacrifice. The Lord's part begins when He accepts the [R5197 : page 75] offering. He stands *sponsor* for His Church and, as the Advocate, becomes responsible for those under His care.

Those who are called *the Church* are privileged to participate in the sacrifices of the present and in the glorious work of the future. A part of that future work will be the sealing of the New Covenant. The Church will have a share in this sealing in the same sense in which she has a share with her Lord in His glory. *The entire merit is in the Lord;* and by His grace we are what we are and have part in the glorious work. By virtue of *membership in the Body* of Christ in glory, the Church have part in the Sin-Offering and are sharers of all that is Christ's, including the work which He will accomplish.

When we present ourselves as living sacrifices, we make consecration unto *death* and consequently, if accepted, lose forever

all right to life on the *human plane*. We present our bodies that we may become priests of the new order, or profession, under the great High Priest, to whom we have given *our lives*. If He accepts them, we have nothing more to do with them. *He* has all title to our *earthly rights*. We do not hold over those rights. In other words, we *cease to be*; we are *beheaded*, so far as all *earthly* hopes or aims are concerned. By virtue of His *perfection*, our Lord has a *right* to everlasting life. We *never had a right* to everlasting life, but are enabled to present ourselves because of His *acceptance* of our sacrifices *as His own*.

Our thought, then, in presenting ourselves must be that we are presented for sacrifice – not that we can compel the Lord to accept our sacrifice, but that we are willing, desirous, that He should accept it. It does not follow, however, that He must accept it, nor that we have anything to do with the ultimate results. We do not set ourselves apart merely to serve righteousness – to do right and to deal justly with our neighbor. This is true of the *Jew*, whose Law Covenant binds him to do this. But it is not so with us; for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." (I Cor. 15:50.) Therefore we purpose that by the assisting grace in Christ we will present our bodies sacrifices even unto death, that according to His covenant with us, He may exalt us *in due time*. (I Pet. 5:6.) We do not merely *forsake sin*, but give up that to which we have a *right* in *earthly interests*.

THE WORK OF THE ADVOCATE

It may be said that the Lord Jesus becomes the Sympathizer to those who believe in Him, even before they present themselves in consecration. But this sympathy is a very different matter from the *Advocacy*, a term which bears the thought of rendering assistance from the store of grace to enable the individual to come into the spirit begotten condition and to *maintain his standing* there.

The term Advocate signifies a friendly and competent representative. If we employ an attorney, he goes into court for us and puts himself down as our advocate, to appear for us in any case that might come up against us. If we should need his assistance, we would cause word to be sent to him, as our attorney.

Our Lord's work as Advocate for the Church began when He appeared in the presence of God and made application of His precious blood on behalf of all those who come unto the Father by Him throughout the Gospel Age. (Heb. 9:24.) Individually, He becomes our Advocate when we come into the acceptable condition by presenting ourselves as living sacrifices. This matter of the imputation of the *merit* of Christ to us and of our *demerit* to Him is, strictly speaking, one with which we have nothing to do. It is the *Father's* arrangement. God does not recognize us at all; for we are by nature sinners. He could not accept our sacrifices except as He *imputes* to us merit which we do not *possess*, but which our Head has provided. In this sense, our Lord's *merit* is said to be imputed to *us* and our *demerit* to *Him*.

If A pays something on B's account, B's account is *credited* with the amount and A's is *debited*. Whatever is imputed to one in the way of *merit* is counted to the other by way of *demerit*. The merit of our Lord, which is to go ultimately to the *world*, is to this extent temporarily charged with *our shortcomings*, and will not be released until we shall have fulfilled our part of the covenant.

BLEMISHES, SPOTS AND WRINKLES DEFINED

The Robe of Christ's Righteousness, otherwise termed the Wedding Garment, is a very beautiful figure of speech illustrative of a certain great truth. Since only the New Creatures, only those begotten of the Holy Spirit, are granted this Robe, and since these are not under condemnation and are not reckoned according to the flesh, it would not be an improper form of statement to say that they

have *no sin*. "Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin." – I John 3:9. R.V.

If the *New Creature* were to sin, the penalty of *death* would be incurred. Sin on the part of the New Creature would signify a change of *will*, a change of *mind*; and the New Creature would *cease to be*. The Robe of Christ's Righteousness does not cover the *imperfections* of the *New Creature*; for the New Creature *never had any imperfection*. In God's sight the New Creature has a standing, and is pure, spotless. The *flesh* is not the *New Creature*, but the *old*, which is reckoned *dead*, and then, as St. Paul says, is also reckoned *alive* as revived or quickened. – Eph. 2:1-7; Col. 2:13; Rom. 6:4.

Our quickened flesh, then, by the grace of God is represented as pure, desirable in His sight, and in proper condition for the marriage – the union with Christ. Whatever spots might appear on this Robe would, of course, be as figurative as the Robe itself, and would represent blemishes. These would not be ours as *New Creatures*, but would result from the fact that for the time being the New Creature must *tabernacle in the flesh*, until it is given its new body.

Blemishes are the weaknesses and imperfections of the flesh. *Spots* are not those wrong-doings of which we are *unconscious*, but those which we seem to *recognize* as contrary to the will of God. These spots may be of different sizes, representing discrepancies, or various degrees of imperfection. In addition to these weaknesses, failings, faults and mistakes, there may be some little carelessness, indolence, neglect of using an opportunity. These may be considered, not as blemishes or spots, but as *wrinkles* on the Robe of Christ's Righteousness.

St. Paul seems to wish to give us the thought of the absolute purity of the class that will ultimately be presented to the Father by our Lord, when he says that the Church will not have a spot or

wrinkle or any such thing, but will be "holy and without blemish." (Eph. 5:27.) This figure, of course, represents perfection of *mind*; for our *bodies* cannot be brought to that condition, because of the fall of Adam. All mankind are born in sin and shapen in iniquity. – Psa. 51:5.

THE NECESSITY OF POSSESSING A TENDER CONSCIENCE

It is the duty of the New Creature to detect the imperfections, errors and shortcomings of the flesh, and to go immediately to the Throne of the Heavenly Grace with them, to obtain mercy and forgiveness. Only those with tender consciences will keep their garments unspotted. The failure to do this seems to be the reason why many **[R5197 : page 76]** fail to make their "calling and election sure." They are not particular about these *little things*; they are careless of opportunities, etc. Thus their robes become spotted and quite unfit for the marriage ceremony.

The Scriptures show us that this class will go through a time of great trouble, during which they will do what they failed to do at the proper time – "wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Rev. 7:14.) By this process of purification, they will come up and will bear palm branches instead of wearing crowns of glory. Instead of being members of the Temple class, they will be servants in the Temple.

The Robe of Christ's Righteousness, the figurative expression which means the imputation of the merit of Christ to those who are accepted as members of His Body, is not only styled "the Wedding Garment" (Matt. 22:11-14), but is also beautifully pictured as the Bridal Robe. (Psa. 45:13,14.) There we read that the Bride will be brought before the great King in garments of needlework. Thus we get the thought that while this Robe is provided for us when first we become members of the family of God and of the prospective Bride

of Christ, nevertheless, there is an individual work for each to accomplish.

This special work is represented as *embroidery*. The design we as Christians are to trace with painstaking zeal; for it requires great skill, close attention. This Robe of Christ's Righteousness, which is represented as being ours in the sight of God, will continue to be ours throughout the everlasting future. It will no longer be ours by imputation, but by right of possession. By that time we shall have made our characters, by the grace and assistance of the Lord, copies of the character of God's dear Son, our Redeemer. Then we shall no longer need the imputation of Christ's merit to cover our blemishes; for the new body which we shall receive in the Resurrection will be without spot or wrinkle – without blemish. It will be *perfect*.

