

But this idea of oblation, found in these multitudinous sacrifices made upon the same altar with those of expiation, finds its most beautiful expression in the offering of the fragrant mixture upon the altar of incense. Composed of rarest and most costly ingredients, compounded only within the sacred precincts of the temple, and according to the formula which God Himself had prescribed, its white clouds wreathing heavenward, and its grateful odors pervading the sanctuary and regaling the sense, told of the delightfulness, both to heaven and to earth, of those devout aspirations, those climbing tendrils of affection, those hopes overleaping the boundaries of time, those spiritual—might I say transcendental?—exercises of the soul which only arise when, within the inner sanctuary, the heart redeemed with blood has been laid upon the altar of love.

It is, I need scarcely assure you, this second class of sacrifices of which the Psalmist is speaking when he says, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit." He is not referring to the sacrifices of expiation, but to the sacrifices of oblation. The atoning sacrifice, the great sin-offering, has already been completed. The blood which purchases pardon has been shed and has been sprinkled. The flesh has been consumed in the fires of holiness, and the expiatory smoke has ascended to heaven; and now the penitent, whose sin has been atoned for, whose acceptance has been secured, whose pardon has been sealed, approaches the golden altar, not to deprecate wrath, or to propitiate favor; not to purchase pardon, or to plead for ablutio; but, as a forgiven sinner, an accepted suppliant, a reconciled son, to offer upon this altar the gifts which testify of gratitude and devotion—which give expression to the new principle of love which wells up with overflowing fulness in a heart redeemed from sin.

This is the order of sacrifice to which continual reference is made in the New Testament. To this belongs the "living sacrifice" (Rom xii: 1), to

which the apostle exhorts his brethren in Rome; the sacrifice and service of faith (Phil. ii: 17), of the Philippians, upon which he was willing to be poured out as a libation; the odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice well pleasing, acceptable to God (Phil. iv: 18), which these Philippians had made on his behalf; the "sacrifice of praise" (Heb. xiii: 15) with which God is well pleased; and the "spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God" (1 Pet. ii: 5) which are rendered by the royal priesthood of believers. Chief of all these, and indeed including all these, is the sacrifice of which the Psalmist speaks in the text: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit." Let us look at it and see the lessons which it conveys:

I. We see the spirituality of the service which God requires. That which is to be laid upon His altar is not something material, however rare or beautiful or costly it may be. The true oblation consists, not in the offering of bullocks or of rams, not in the presentation of the finest of the wheat or the richest of the oil; but in the offering of a spiritual sacrifice—the oblation of the soul upon the altar of God. We are prone to think that God's true people in ancient times had little conception of the spirituality of religion; that their service was a mere routine of ceremonial ordinances and ritual observances. Nothing can be further from the truth. Under the old economy, the sinner in whose heart the Spirit of God had wrought a genuine conviction of sin, could no more rest his hope of salvation in a mere compliance with the Levitic ritual, than one under genuine conviction now can be satisfied with a barren use of forms, or a lifeless attendance upon the ordinances and sacraments of God's house. There were many then, as, alas! there are many now, whose religious experience went no further than these mere externals of religion. But then, as now, wherever there was a genuine work of grace in the heart, the conscience could not be appeased by these. The soul, conscious of its deep-lying needs,