

ed and gnarled and distorted. They are, in fact, the roots of trees originally anchored in the ground, which served to hide their grotesque ugliness. At a glance you pronounced them of no conceivable utility, for they are too hard and knotty even to be split into fire-wood. The disposition at first made of these deformed lag-ends of the trees serves to confirm the unskilled judgment you have formed of their worthlessness. They are thrown into a dock, where they lie for months submerged in water, or half buried in the mud and ooze left by the receding tide.

Let us ask the ship carpenter or naval constructor why he permits this apparent refuse to cumber his yard. With a look expressive of pity for our ignorance, he explains that these unsightly stumps and roots are his most valuable material. No wooden ship could be built without them. They are relatively scarce, too, and expensive to handle, so they always fetch a much higher price than the straight timber with which we had been invidiously comparing them. After being suitably seasoned under water,—for that is the purpose of their submergence—and being shaped with hatchet and adze, these "knees"—so they are technically termed—are fitted into the varying angles beneath the decks, and into the indescribable corners formed where curving timbers meet in stem and stern, so as to give that strength and durability which are essential to a structure destined to resist the buffetings of many stormy seas. A ship must be compact and firm; with no play of the joints, or loose fitting of piece to piece; with no such yielding of the frame as is permissible in our strongest dwellings. And this requisite solidity is obtained through the careful riveting into their places of our despised ungainly knees.

A well-built ship is, however, not only a marvel of strength, she is also a model of almost faultless beauty. The house carpenter delights in straight-grained timber, and scorns to use the crooked; but does any structure which he rears bear a comparison in grace or symmetry to a clipper like the Flying Cloud, or a frigate like the Niagara? Yet it is said that in their hulls only the keel and stern-post are straight, the very beams and planks having been artificially bent; so we may say that these marvellous creations, so artistically modelled that every line is a line of beauty, are built up of crooked sticks.

May not this similitude suggest a practical lesson? We meet with many men who are somewhat contemptuously described as "crooked sticks." They are so termed because of certain angularities of disposition, which constantly put them at variance with their environment. They are of crabbed and cross-grained temper. In manner self-assertive, dogmatic, contradictory. We have them in our churches, and they are trouble-breeders there. Chronic fault-finders themselves, they foment discontent in others; and so constitute an element both of discomfort and of disturbance. The question constantly recurs, What shall be done with them? Our heroic method of treatment, often adopted, is that of ejection. They are by some means gotten rid of. May not the craftsman of the ship-yard suggest a better way? He is not repelled by the forbidding exterior of the live-oak or hackmatack roots. He knows that in the gnarled and twisted fibres within are hidden elements of strength and beauty which he seeks in vain in any straight-grained log. Is there in your social or church circle a crooked stick who vexes and irritates and repels, and whom you are disposed to cast out? Consider first whether something may not be made of him. Doubtless, like the ship timber, he needs much seasoning, and shaping, and polishing. In truth, he needs renewal and sanctification. By the beneficent

grace of God, he may become a pillar of strength and beauty in the house of the Lord, and at last get into the channel of your brotherly sympathy and your loving helpfulness.

How many crooked sticks there are, too, in our Sunday-schools! There are whole classes of unruly boys or frivolous girls, who are the terror of teachers and superintendent. You have been invited, perhaps, to take charge of such a class, and the proposal has filled you with dismay. Well, if you are a teacher, for the sake of promoting your own placid enjoyment, you will, no doubt, seek the instructed and the docile; but if you desire the sphere of widest usefulness, you will find it surely in devoting yourself to the patient training of the ignorant and the neglected. Reflect that, without your care, these untutored, wayward waifs may become outcast and reprobate. Consider, on the other hand, their latent capacities—what by grace they may become, and how great will be your reward, if, through your instrumentality, they are introduced to a career of usefulness and blessedness. Do you respond to my plea for the unruly and the unlovely that you have no fitness for so difficult a task as their training? May you not rather be stimulated by the thought that it is so absolutely a work of faith? It will do you good to engage in a work in which you will be forced to realize your entire dependence upon that grace which can transform and beautify the rudest and the most abject.

It should make us more charitable and more helpful to remember that in God's eyes we are all but crooked sticks. That inward crookedness which distorts every fallen nature is as offensive to Him as the outward is to us. Yet the unceasing marvel of His mercy is, that out of such perverted natures as ours He condescends to build up that spiritual house which shall hereafter appear as the perfection of beauty. The mission of the Son of man is "to seek and to save that which was lost." Never are we so truly imitators of Him as when striving to reclaim those who in disposition and manner are most unattractive and repellent.—S. S. Times.

INTERNATIONAL S. S. LESSON.

November 6th.

LESSON VI.

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT—Lev. xvi. 16-30.

GOLDEN TEXT.—We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.—Rom. v. 11.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—Christ taketh away sin.

LESSON EXPLANATIONS.

BY J. HALL, D.D., NEW YORK.

Our lesson is interesting because (a) it describes the only occasion in the year when the holy of holies was entered, and the way of entrance; (b) the only fast in the year appointed by God; (c) the peculiar rite of the scapegoat; and (d) it furnishes the explanation of various Scripture references, especially in Heb. ix. and x.

All before this in Leviticus has been devoted to the ways of approaching God. A Jew might say, "I have complied to the letter with all the ritual of the tabernacle. Now I am accepted before God. My service is all that is required." This day of atonement said, "Nay; even your holy things need to be atoned for, and more is needed than you can ever do," (Heb. x. 4-10). It is one of the strongest ways of showing that the Levitical rites were not final nor inherently atoning, but only preparatory and typical (Heb. x. 3). The holiness of God, shutting out sinful man, had been proved in the case of Naab and Abihu (v. 1), and is restated to Aaron in vs. 3, 4. He

can only come with a sacrifice (Heb. ix. 7). He does not wear his usual costly garments, but the simplest linen robes (v. 4), and formal washing is enjoined—all to show that even the priest has no rights before God. He offers his bullock for himself and his house (vs. 6, 7), and brings the two goats from the people before the Lord, when it is determined by lot which shall be slain and which sent away (vs. 8-10).

Then the high-priest brought the blood of the bullock, and in the midst of the cloud of incense from the censer in his hand he entered the holy of holies, and sprinkled it upon and before the mercy seat (vs. 11-14). The significance of this is stated in Heb. ix. 3. These Jewish rites did not open the way to God. That was reserved for Christ to do. (v. 11).

Then followed the killing of the goat for the people (v. 15), of which also the blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat, as before. This brings us to our lesson, of which the first part is the cleansing of the holy places (vs. 15-19). They are, the holy place, the tabernacle (v. 16), the altar (v. 18). (See v. 20). They are according to Heb. ix. 23, "the pattern of things in the heavens," the temple of God above. Sinful Hebrews defiled these courts of God's house by their own sin. Atonement and cleansing must be made for them. So we sinful men would defile the upper sanctuary. Atonement has to be made for us. "The heavenly things" typified are made accessible to us, "with better sacrifices than these" (Heb. ix. 23-24), "once for all" (vs. 25-26).

In this part of the lesson the following points are to be noticed: (a) No one was allowed to be in the tabernacle court during this cleansing (v. 17). The priest alone atoned; Christ alone saves. No one helped Him. "I have trodden the wine-press alone," etc. (Isa. lxiii. 3). Disciples, friends, even His Father, forsook Him (See Ps. xxiii) (b) The altar (v. 18), not of incense, but of sacrifice (Lev. iv. 24), is purified. Sacrifices standing for sin defiled it. All that sin touches is defiled. The ground is "cursed" for man's sake (Gen. iii. 17.) All this showed Israel that even the religious rites God ordained—performed by sinful men—were impure and insufficient to make a perfect sacrifice, with power to put away sin. A perfect priest must be found. That is the promised Messiah (Heb. ix. 11).

The next point is the sending away of the scapegoat (vs. 20-22). The Hebrew word for it is *azazel*, and many have found in this a name of Satan or of a demon, and supposed that the devil is recognized in the atonement; but nothing in the word requires that it should be a proper name. If, however, this should be proved, the fair inference would be that it prefigured Christ's submission to the assaults of the devil in the wilderness and elsewhere. But nowhere in Scripture is Christ said to pay a debt to Satan. He satisfied divine justice, as shown in the law, which made death "the wages of sin." Notice the order.

After (v. 20) the priest had "reconciled" (see Col. i. 20) the holy place, etc., he brings the live goat, confesses, with both hands on his head, the sins of the people, transferring them ceremonially to the scapegoat, which is then sent away by "a fit man" into an uninhabited place and let go.

The form of atonement by the sprinkling of blood the people did not see. It was within the sanctuary. This form of putting the sins of the guilty on the head of an innocent but devoted substitute they do see. It is another aspect of the Redeemer's work, away from His Father's house, in the wilderness of this world. Solitary—none able to enter into His terrible task, and even His friends deprecating it. His life and death and intercession for us all enter into the work of redemption He accomplished.

It is one of the many proofs we have of the liability of the fathers to err in strict interpretation (they are not an infallible guide, though their instincts are commonly right), that they so so commonly read the scapegoat for *azazel*, though sometimes making the object of the goat being sent away to triumph over *azazel*, the demon or Satan! Others, reading *azazel* as a proper name, understand that in the act all the sin of Israel is driven away to Satan, to whom as tempter it belonged. We mention these to show how, even if we had to take *azazel* as a proper name, other theories are open to us than the paying of a price to Satan by Christ. But *azazel* (which is nowhere else in Scripture) without violence is rendered the escaping one (so Luther, the LXX., the Vulgate, Josephus, some of the fathers, etc.), and hence the scapegoat fairly gives the idea.

Notice (a) the two goats make one sin offering (vs. 5-10); (b) they are offered differently, as is the case of the sin offering (Lev. v. 7-10). In the case of the leprous man's offering, one bird is "let loose into the open fields" (Lev. xiv. 7).

The next distinct part of our lesson respects the after-proceedings (vs. 23-28). The forgiveness having been shown forth, the high priest puts off the linen garments, comes forth in his beautiful robes, and as accepted representative of them offers the customary offerings. The "fat," representing the best part, is offered. While he is so engaged the fit man returns (v. 26), defiled by his contact with the scapegoat, and washes his flesh with water in the sight of the people in the holy place, and also his garments, and then can go into the camp. Though sin be put away in law, we must not forget it, but remember our evil that we may be humble and thankful. (See Heb. x. 22, probably a reference to this washing).

Then the carcass of the bullock and the other goat, and all connected with them, are carried outside the camp and burned, the person doing this going through the same rites (v. 28) as the "fit man" for the scapegoat (v. 26). The consuming of these while the fat is being burned on the altar is probably significant of the complete putting away of all the sin represented and confessed. Its defiling nature is shown in all these details.

The remainder of our lesson is the enactment of this as a perpetual rite (vs. 29-30). The service was not an outward form; the soul was to be in it, afflicted, humbled, penitent. The time is the seventh month and the tenth day of it (see (Lev. xxiii. 26-32). All occupations cease, the stranger resting as truly as the Hebrew (see Lev. xxiii). When religion declined this was disregarded (see Isa. lviii. 3). The following verses describe a true reform.

Learn—

(1) Even the priest who offers sacrifice needs a way of access to the divine majesty. He and his services require cleansing. *Christ only did not require such.* (See Heb. vii. 11-16-19).

(2) Christ when atoning for us is not in His divine glory, but in the likeness of sinful flesh. The priest put on his robes of beauty after atonement. So Christ entered into His glory after His humiliation.

(3) The "scapegoat" shows that the blood of bulls and of goats cannot take away sin (Heb. x. 4). Perfection was not reached by the whole ample ritual of blood and fire. Something yet remained. Erring often as to the process, the fathers commonly found Christ in the scapegoat, bearing our sins away (Isa. liii. 4-6).

(4) As the blood and incense went together, so do the death and intercession of Christ (Heb. vii. 25).

(5) Sin in every form of it is hateful to God. Its touch defiles.