THE SIN-OFFERING AND THE GUILT-OFFERING

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It has been customary to classify the קְטֻנָא (guilt-offering) as a type of קְטַנְתּ (sin-offering), or at least to think of them as being in the same class (Gray, Sacrifice in the Old Testament, p. 65). This has been inevitable, since there appears to be confusion between the two in the sacrificial code itself, to some extent in the Hebrew, but to a much greater extent in the modern translations. (See De Vaux, Ancient Israel, p. 421, who gives a list of the inconsistencies that exist in the relevant chapters of Leviticus and Numbers). His conclusion is that the last redactors had no clear idea of the difference between two terms which had originally been synonymous or they confused two terms whose precise meaning they did not understand. Our view is that the difference between the two terms is that the sin-offering is concerned with unwitting offences whilst the guilt offering is concerned with offences where damage has been done and loss incurred, which in most cases can be assessed. But the confusion is still there.

Lev. iv 1-v 13 is concerned with the sin-offering. Lev. v 14-vi 7 (Heb. v 14-26) is concerned with the guilt-offering. The confusion is due to three things: (i) the use of בֵּיתָן (unwittingly) in v 18, which is in the guilt-offering section; (ii) the use of the verb שֵׁנָה (be guilty) in v 5, 6, 7 and of the noun שֵׁנָא (guilt, guilt-offering) in v 6 and v 7, all of which are in the sin-offering section; (iii) the additional confusion caused in (for example) the English Versions by their translations of the root שֵׁנָא in v 5, 6, 7. In detail, AV, RV and RSV all translate the verb by ‘be guilty’. In v 6 AV translates the noun by ‘trespass offering’ and RV and RSV by ‘guilt offering’. In v 7 RV and RSV have ‘guilt offering’, but AV has ‘trespass’. In both verses RV offers ‘guilt’ and ‘trespass offering’ in the margin. As we hope to show, the main difficulty and confusion is caused by rendering שֵׁנָא as ‘guilt offering’. Philo (De Victimis 11) realised that the sin-offering dealt with unwitting faults, and he understood from Lev. v 14-17
that the guilt-offering dealt with deliberate faults as well as with unwitting faults (Heb. v 20-26; Eng. vi 1-7). He was right, but he did not understand the true distinction between the two offerings. The distinction which Josephus makes (Ant. Iud. III ix 3)—without and with witnesses—has nothing whatever to be said in favour of it.

We deal first with the difficulties in the texts of the ancient versions. These are largely in the Hebrew, partly in the Samaritan and almost wholly absent in Septuagint.

1. Lev. v 5. The clause which in the Hebrew contains the verb בָּשָׂע (be guilty) is not found in LXX, neither is the verb found in LXX at the end of v 2. Also after הָפַךְ (confess) in v 5, LXX adds 'his sin', as if reading לְעַל-הָפַךְ. Further, although the Samaritan contains the first clause in v 5, the verb is מָנָח and not בָּשָׂע.

2. Lev. v 6. This again is in the sin-offering section, but the same phrase occurs here as in v 15, which is in the guilt-offering section: 'he shall bring his מָנָח to the Lord'. In v 6 LXX has περὶ δὲ ἐπιλεκτικά (concerning the things wherein he has transgressed) and in v 15 τῆς πλημμελίας αὐτοῦ (of his transgression).

3. Lev. v 7. Instead of מָנָח (RSV his guilt-offering), LXX has ἀμαρτίας αὐτοῦ, as if reading ἀμαρτήθηται αὐτόν. This probably means 'sin-offering', since both מָנָח and ἀμαρτία are used both for 'sin' and for 'sin-offering'. Cf. incidentally 2 Cor v. 21.

We conclude that LXX recognises a Hebrew verb מָנָח in the sense of 'offend' πλημμελέω, which is an intransitive verb with the indirect object governed by either περὶ or εἰς, as in classical Greek. The translators do their best to avoid the verb when they are dealing with the sin-offering.

What, then, is the difference between the מָנָח (sin-offering) and the מָנָח (so-called guilt-offering)? The answer is that the first has to do with unwitting offences, and the second has to do with offences which have caused damage. These latter offences may be either unwitting or deliberate, but they all cause damage.

There are five important differences between the ritual of the sin-offering and that of the so-called guilt-offering.

(a). The 'owner' placed his hand on the head of the sin-offering, thus transferring his sin to it so that it becomes 'the sin'—as we pointed out above, the same word מָנָח is used for both 'sin' and 'sin-offering', and this is the reason why. The sin/sin-offering had to be got rid of. The priests ate it within the holy place, or it was destroyed by fire לֶשֶב 'outside the camp'. The first was when no priest