

LECTURE I

INTRODUCTORY

THE dominant personality in humanity is Jesus Christ, and the most outstanding fact in history is His crucifixion. No other life has excited so great admiration and wonder, no other death has occasioned so prolonged and ardent controversy to account for its consequences. He had scarcely vanished from the gaze of men before His life began to be represented as that of a defeated religious reformer, whose death was simply a lamentable catastrophe marking the untimely end of one who had endeavoured, like many other martyrs, to "fulfil great hopes at the wrong time, or in impracticable ways." Yet after eighteen centuries of similar attempts to minimise their significance, the awe inspired by the life and death of Jesus is deeper than ever, and by increasing multitudes in each successive generation His cross is accepted as the symbol of their faith, and the divine pledge of their salvation.

Although the discussion is still proceeding—and indeed is being waged with greater earnestness than ever—

it has already yielded some very important results. For example, historical criticism has decided that Jesus as presented in the Gospels is no fiction. Whatever questions may still be pending as to the structure of these narratives themselves, there is no longer any question as to the reality of their subject. Jesus, in the marvellous purity and sublimity of character there unconsciously delineated, is admitted to be a fact by even anti-Christian writers. The reverence of the unbelieving world for Jesus is steadily increasing. Now, when we consider the conditions of time and place under which Jesus appeared, the country, and especially the people from whom He was supposed to have sprung, we find that a vast deal is involved in this admission. It means that in a period of general corruption, of moral and religious declension which law and philosophy were powerless to arrest or remedy, one emerged from the prevailing depravity in the likeness of sinful flesh, who could confidently challenge the world to convict Him of a single fault or indiscretion. Characterised by no idiosyncrasy, for all the qualities that mark ideals of character were harmoniously exhibited in Him,—manlier than the bravest man, tenderer than the gentlest woman,—He confronted the world as a new type in whom there was neither "Jew nor Gentile, neither male nor female."¹ Alone of all good men, who in proportion to their goodness have invariably confessed their evil and deplored their hard struggle to do their duty, He felt no struggle, and owned to no defeat. Never did there

¹ Galatians iii. 28.

escape from His lips a single confession of sin, or one prayer for pardon for Himself; and yet, though He acknowledged and felt no sin in Himself, the sins of others affected Him more grievously than they affected sinners themselves. As He grew in experience, sorrow for the sinfulness of others became a burden heavier than He could bear, for it involved Him in an agony unapproachable by all other human beings, and at last in a death due far less to the pangs of crucifixion than to the anguish of a broken heart.¹

A life so unique cannot be estimated by the measure of a man; it cannot be accounted for upon the principles by which we endeavour to explain human nature and history. Its exceptional character implies an exceptional origin. Life, like water, cannot rise higher than its source. If He were only the outgrowth of humanity the failings that are inseparable from humanity would have manifested themselves in Him, so that while proving Himself to be the best of men, He would have shown Himself to be only a man at the best. When, however, we observe that the sinfulness universal in humanity could not touch Him, except in the way of causing Him unparalleled grief, we feel that we contemplate in Him a new phenomenon. He is no more the "product of the age" than the sun is the product of the darkness which it bursts and chases away. Nor is He the result and fruit of the "best forces of

¹ Cp. Dr. Stroud, *The Physical Cause of the Death of Christ*. London: Hamilton and Adams, ed. 1847, 1871. Rev. Samuel

Haughton, M.D., *Church Quarterly Review*, January 1880, reprinted in *The Speaker's Commentary on 1 John*, pp. 349-50.

human nature matured in a long series of antecedent ages." Even after eighteen centuries of ever-enriching experience, no one expects humanity to produce such a man as Jesus of Nazareth. By universal confession He is far greater than the Church which He founded, transcending alike the imagination and the faith of His followers. He is still a fact which no science of man, no philosophy of history has accounted for. He is "The Wonderful," in truth the greatest wonder that has occurred in the world since the first appearance of man. Tried by the standards of the creatures beneath him, man is found to be the miracle of nature; for while he is all that nature beneath him is, he is what the most highly developed natural outgrowth, by no training, however patient and skilful, by no process of selection, however prolonged, has ever been observed to become. In like manner, when tried by the standard of man, Jesus Christ is the great miracle of humanity. Manifesting in our nature a holiness such as never was conceived by the purest imagination of the saints, He confronts us in the evolution of the Divine purpose not as a product of nature or humanity, but as a sign of transition or revolution, in reality an incarnation, through whom there is introduced into human history a higher standard of character and a new principle of life.

When we examine into the significance and purpose of this miracle, and inquire what eternal interests were at stake in creation requiring the manifestation of Jesus, we get the answer not only reflected from His

person, but uttered in His words, with unmistakable clearness. We learn at once that we have to do with no mere prophet or reformer who had been raised up to promote the education of men by correcting their errors and enlarging the spheres of their knowledge. He is, in the peculiar simplicity and sublimity of His faith—that is, of His absolute and loving surrender to God as His Father—a witness against man as he is. At the same time, in His peculiar holiness and power, He is a prophecy and pledge of what man may be. It is manifest that nowhere and at no point of his history has man realised the ideal of his nature. On the contrary, both “in himself and in society and in the outward world there is a hostile element ever working to warp and corrupt that ideal.”¹ Only potentially or ultimately can man be described as *made* “in the image and after the likeness of God.” By whatever theory we endeavour to account for his present condition, it is undeniable that he requires supernatural aid to educate, ay, to keep him from decline. It is a fact of his natural life that, though conscious of a moral law, he breaks it upon the very first temptation, through his self-assertion to the corrupting or undoing of his original nature.² In Christ we learn how very far man is from being what man was meant to be, and from Christ we learn that if the original ideal is to be realised it must be through the surrender of our own work and will to the control of a will higher than ours. Man cannot *grow* into, he must be *made* in the image and after the

¹ *Colloquia Crucis*, p. 48. ² Driver, *Sermons on Old Testament*, p. 24.

likeness of God. So Christ taught us that He came from our Creator His Father to undo our unmaking of ourselves. We are "lost," and He had come to "find" us; we are in bondage, and He was seeking to deliver and redeem us; we are diseased and perishing, and He was attempting to heal and "save" us. And this, not by relieving us from the necessary burdens of existence or from the consequences of our wrongdoing by improving the present world or by removing us to a better, but by working in us such a regeneration of character as would amount to a new creation, in which, reconciled with God, we should share the Divine life and enjoy His blessedness.

The same clearness characterises His declarations of the method by which this purpose was to be effected. From the very outset He foresaw that His mission would involve Him in persecution, and finally in death upon the cross; yet straight to the cross as to His proper goal He steadily travelled, conscious that in suffering upon it He would fulfil the very work which He came into the world to do. Instead, therefore, of referring to His crucifixion as a painful necessity which He must reluctantly endure, He uniformly pointed to it as a seal of His Messiahship. "His death was something more in His own mind than the inevitable consequence of His fidelity to the truth, and of His antagonism to the corruption of the times. It was His intention to die for men, because His death was necessary for human redemption."¹ Therefore, Son of the

¹ Dale, *The Atonement*, The Congregational Union Lecture for 1875, p. iv, Preface.

Highest, He had come in the form and after the fashion in which He was manifested; voluntarily shorn of glory, emptied of fulness; not to rule, but to obey; not "to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."¹

Christ's testimony concerning the purpose of His mission appears to be consistent with its character and its close; while if it be discredited or rejected, His whole life, and especially His sufferings and death, remain insoluble enigmas. Our chief difficulties with regard to the Sacrifice of Christ originate in our conceptions of Divine justice. That the innocent should suffer for the guilty would be a contradiction of the Divine righteousness, as expressed in the law—"the soul that sinneth it shall die, but the righteous shall live by his righteousness."² Now that law is eternal, and it operates in Providence as unchangeably and inexorably as the law of gravitation in nature. The law of gravitation, however, like all natural laws, can only be properly understood in the light of the higher laws of the human or supernatural order, in which man can utilise natural laws to give stability and confirmation to works which he has produced in apparent contravention of them. In like manner, the law of retribution, which governs our lives, must be interpreted by some other facts of the spiritual order to which we belong. For, while the sinner does suffer for his sin, it is manifest that he is not the only—or even the greatest—sufferer. It frequently happens that those

¹ Mark x. 45.

² Ezskiel xviii. 20.

who have never been tempted to commit some special form of sin, and who have suffered no personal damage from its commission, are the most grievously affected by it. The very thought of such a sin may wound a pure and sensitive nature more keenly than any remorse which its perpetrator may experience, and any suffering which its immediate victim may endure. It is such suffering, wholly undeserved, that interprets, and is interpreted by, the sufferings of Christ. The fact is most patent that, notwithstanding His perfect sinlessness, He was involved in an anguish for sin which has amazed every generation. No darkness that ever gathered round a sinner could be more profound than that which deepened down upon the well-beloved Son of God. No voice out of the misery of retributive punishment ever expressed desolation so utter as that which cried, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me." If the law of retribution is the only law which reveals the justice of God, an insurmountable difficulty confronts us in the passion of Christ because of sin. The theory that He suffered to set us an example of patient endurance, does not solve the difficulty. Indeed it throws as dark a blot upon the justice of God as the theory which it would condemn; for why should perfect innocence be afflicted just to teach or help the guilty to bear patiently the penalty of their guilt? Whatever theories we weave or tear asunder, the fact remains that Christ did suffer more severely because of sin than sinners ever endured in it. And when we duly consider this fact, and think of the blessings that

have accrued to humanity from these sufferings, His own teaching concerning their sacrificial significance will be found to be more reasonable than any of the theories which have been devised to explain that teaching away.¹

The testimony of Christ concerning His mission of redemption by the sacrifice of Himself, not only harmonises with the teaching of Holy Scripture, but also satisfies a universal and profound human want. The doctrine of His vicarious sacrifice need not be accepted as true just because it is found in the Bible. It is revealed in the Bible because it is true, and because it corresponds with the older revelation given in the nature which is common to all men. Though the leaves of that older revelation are soiled and defaced, they have not been destroyed; and their contents have been sufficiently deciphered to convince us that they were originally written by the finger of God. It is the accord of Christ's revelation with universal human necessity and aspiration that stamps its divinity. For the real meaning of His vicarious sacrifice we must search deeper than in the testimonies of the doctors and fathers and even the Apostles of the Church. We shall only discover it in the actual condition of man as related to the essential nature of God. It is because

¹ The death of Christ has been described "as the greatest moral act which the world has ever seen" (Jowett, "Essay on Satisfaction and Atonement," *Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. p. 550). So, indeed, it was, but some who have ab-

jured the doctrine of its atoning efficacy, have continued to adore it as the highest example ever given of self-immolating love. If, however, the idea of the vicarious sacrifice be rejected, the death becomes an act without any moral

the sacrifice of Christ discloses in the being or character of God, facts that are indispensable to the purifying and pacifying of the human conscience, that He proves Himself to be the Saviour of the world and the only Redeemer of man.¹

Therefore, unto the manifestation of this Redeemer in time, "the unspeakable throes of humanity had been tending from the first"; and so we may expect to find, as we look back in the light of the event, indications of a long course of preparation for it. All the dispensations of God, in a universe governed by law, submit to and follow a providentially ordered course, so that nothing happens by accident. God's revelation of Himself, and of His redemptive purpose for man, has its history, which, like that of all things, matures and ripens in time. The words "evolution" in science, "foreordination" in theology, probably suggest after all the same fact, viz., that every event implies a series of previous events, without which it could not have occurred. The manifestation of Christ was in accord with this general law. Miraculous, in the sense that it was unexpected, and inexplicable by experience, it was no violent interruption of providence. It was the fulfilment of a divine purpose at a period when a long course of preparation for it was completed. What

significance. Self-immolation is not valuable—not even beautiful—except when it promotes some high moral and spiritual end not otherwise to be attained. "Under any other aspect it is as perverse

and futile as it is when shown in the self-torture and suicide of an Indian fakir."—*Colloquia Crucis*, p. 71.

¹ Trench, *Hulsean Lectures*, p. 157.

occurred in nature antecedently to the creation of man, suggests a possible analogy. The sciences of comparative anatomy and physiology have instructed us that the human body is the pattern form of the vertebrate division of animal existence, which nature, through fish and reptile and bird, strives upward to reach. So geology has disclosed in the records of the rocks some very ancient prophecies of man. The animal productions of nature from the first exhibit typical references to one who is

"The king
Of nature, in his person summing all
Her attributes, as she throughout her vast
Extension symbols his humanity."¹

As the great prophecies of nature are all fulfilled in man, so we may confidently assert that Christ is the divine archetype towards whose manifestation Providence in all previous dispensations was leading. The lines along which Providence was proceeding, and the successive stages in that leading, we may be even less able to trace, than we can trace the stages in the long process during which "a transmitted organism was progressively modified, till the Creator, by some law, perhaps undiscoverable, united with it, under certain conditions, an immaterial soul." But we may be confident that in both spheres—the spiritual or supernatural, and the physical or natural—the continuity of the fulfilment of the Divine purpose was unbroken. The indications, though only very partially detected by our imperfect

¹ F. Tennyson, *Daphne and other Poems*, p. 301.

observation, are now sufficiently suggestive since the reality to whom they pointed has been disclosed, that Christ was indeed sent forth "in the fulness of time."¹

This is plainly declared in Scripture, though we have been accustomed till recently to limit its application to the religious history of one people. In the wider horizons to which our vision has been providentially directed, we have learned that the Scripture expressions "the ends of the world,"² the "dispensation of the fulness of time,"³ have a universal reference; and that Christ, instead of being only the Redeemer of the Jewish people, or of the Christian Church, is the Mediator of the whole scheme of the grace of God for all mankind. Humanity is neither "a congeries of nations from which God selects one to be the recipient of His favour, nor an agglomeration of individual atoms capable of isolating themselves from the rest, and of standing alone."⁴ Humanity is an organic unity, whose lowest member is essential to the well-being of the highest. What is done in a part is done for the whole; what is revealed to the Jew is revealed for the Gentile. In the dispensation of redemption the unit is the human race; and though in that dispensation the divine methods are mysterious, the divine purpose has been clearly announced, and that is the "gathering together in one of all things in Christ, both which are

¹ Green, *Prologomena to Ethics*, p. 87; Miller, *Footprints of the Creator*, p. 291; Fairbairn, *Typology*, vol. i. p. 380.

² 1 Corinthians x. 11.

³ Ephesians i. 10.

⁴ Bersier, *The Oneness of the Race in its Fall and its Future*. London, 1871, p. 48.

in heaven, and which are on earth," the reconciliation unto Himself "of those who were sometime alienated and enemies in their mind by wicked works in the body of His flesh through death, to present them holy and unblameable and unreprouable in His sight."¹ This was the mystery so hidden from the ages that the most inspired prophet did not comprehend what he was moved by the Holy Ghost to utter concerning it. But we, who read the prophecies and providences of ancient times in the light of the Gospel, are now able to discover predictions and types of it in other religions than the Jewish one. We can see how Jesus, when declaring to those who wished to make Him their king, that He had come to be their sacrifice, and to give them life through His death, was "not without venerable witness in the conscience and traditions of mankind."² We may be able to trace only a few faint indications of this witnessing, but we may confidently affirm the reality of it. As Judaism, not so much in respect of its success, as of its failure to meet the *spiritual* wants of mankind, was a prophecy of Christ, so heathenism at its best, in respect of its inadequacy to satisfy men's *moral* necessities, was a prophecy of Judaism. It is, then, the peculiar glory of Christ that He is related, not simply to Judaism, but to every religion by which man has endeavoured to express his highest hopes and soothe his greatest fears. He is the reality towards whom they all tend, in whom

¹ Colossians i. 20 ; Ephesians ii. 16.

² Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, *Nineteenth Century*, 1891, p. 671.

they are all fulfilled, and of whom, therefore, not only in their "guesses at truth," but in their aberrations from it, which have made philosophy abhor the name of religion, they all unconsciously testify.

The subject selected for exposition in this lecture is the prophetic significance of religious rites which may be said to have prevailed in every discovered or discoverable form of religion. Wherever man has been found, and as far back as he can be traced by his relics or language, sacrifice under various forms is a prominent feature of his religion. It is true that the word "sacrifice" is not a primitive word, being without equivalent or correspondent in the common dictionary of the Aryan nations.¹ It has also a more limited application now than in very ancient times, for then it covered any religious act, such as the ceremonial observed in lighting or mending the fire on the domestic hearth. Even old Latin writers often understood by it not an offering, but the whole ceremonial or *ιεροπυλα* of religion.² The habitual usage of the word, however, has for a very long time corresponded to its etymology, as signifying oblations presented in a sacred place, or upon or before an altar, which involved the slaughter of a victim and the consequent loss of it to the offerer.³ As thus defined,

¹ Müller, *Physical Religion*, p. 106.

² Plautus, *Amphit.*, act iii. sc. 3, makes *rem divinam facere* and *sacrificare* the same; also *Religion of Socrates*, p. 197.

³ "Sacrificium est victima, et

quæcunque in ara cremantur (Lactant., lib. vi. cap. ult., quoted by Sykes, *Essay on Sacrifice*, p. 7). In Hebrew the word *korban* is the generic name including not only oblations at the altar, but sacred gifts of all kinds such

sacrifice from time immemorial has prevailed all over the world, in all forms of religion natural to man. It cannot be associated with only savage notions of life and duty, nor can it be regarded as marking a barbarous stage which as man advances religion will leave behind. As matter of fact no religion with the exception of our own has outgrown or discarded it. The founder of Buddhism vainly endeavoured to wean men from the practice of it in the East, and nowhere in the West did philosophy succeed in dispossessing the heart of belief in its efficacy. In Christianity alone sacrificial slaughter never found a place, and yet sacrifice is still the central thought in the Christian theory of religion, and the leading principle in Christian practice. Everywhere else, save among sections of non-Christian peoples, who rejecting the formal dogmas of our religion, have yet been greatly influenced by its spirit, the most cultured as well as the rudest of nations have believed in and practised sacrifice as an acceptable and profitable service.¹

The universal prevalence of sacrifice, the ineradicable belief in its efficacy even when contradicted by the higher reasonings of men,² surely indicates some

as the materials composing the structure of the tabernacle. Not every gift was a sacrifice, but only such as were offered immediately to God and consumed in whole or in part in the manner appointed."—Outram, *De Sacrificiis*, p. 82.

¹ Kennicott, *Two Dissertations*, p. 161; Maurice, *Sacrifice*, pp. 45, 61.

² Sane tantum aberat—unde ritus tam tristis, et a natura deorum alienus in hominum corda veniret, se tam longe propagaret et eorum moribus tam tenaciter adhereret."—Spencer, *De Leg. Heb.*, lib. iii. Diss. ii. c. 4; also Porphyry quoted by Eusebius, *Præp. Evang.*, lib. iv. c. 10.

demand of nature. A disposition which the most cultured heathen nations were not able to outlive may be described, like man's belief in Deity and in his own soul, as indigenous to his nature. Beliefs which are instinctive are properly regarded as pointing to some reality which can satisfy them. Like our physical organs they imply a correlate of some kind. The eye implies an element of light, and in like manner man's instinctive belief in Deity, though by no means to be assumed as a demonstration of the existence of Deity, is a ground of probability so strong that it would be foolish and dangerous to disregard it as a motive or director of conduct. The same reasoning applies to the universal belief in the efficacy of sacrifice. Though all man's sacrificial acts have failed to ease his conscience, yea, just because they have failed, the presumption that there must be some Divine reality to satisfy the universal craving is a strong one. No constitutional instinct ever yet betrayed; nature never made a mistake. "The structure of man," says Emerson, "is not an organised lie, nor is any false expectation raised in a universe whose Creator keeps His word with the very least of His creatures." So when we discover that wherever the sacrifice of Christ is properly presented, material sacrifice ceases in the worship of God, and the disposition to offer it is regenerated and transformed into the surrender of ourselves to Christ in thankoffering for our salvation, we have surely not presumptive but conclusive evidence that the spiritual necessities of man expressed by his sacrifices have been divinely provided for.

It is in this sense we maintain that there is in sacrifice a typical element, more prophetic and reliable, than some theologians formerly professed to find in the personages and institutions and events described in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament there are many true types of the divine original revealed in the New; but it is now generally admitted that some of the analogies formerly adduced were trifling and far-fetched. We have learned to reject them therefore, as "frivolous conceits by which well-meaning apologists brought ridicule on the themes which they endeavoured to vindicate." We are now seeking for the real types, those which were divinely pre-ordained to be prophetic of Christ, in the actions and beliefs which express the instincts of man as a creature essentially moral and religious. It is allowed by the most trustworthy typologists that the true type and antitype must alike be constituent parts of the same general scheme of Divine Providence.¹ And surely there can be no truer or clearer types of the redemption which God is accomplishing, than those original necessities of human nature which are satisfied and those instinctive beliefs which are regenerated and fulfilled by the revelation of the Divine sacrifice in Christ.

If it be granted or assumed that the disposition to sacrifice is instinctive in humanity, we need not discuss a question formerly keenly debated as to whether sacrifice was a human invention or a Divine institution.² The proposition was often very improperly

¹ Fairbairn, *Typology*, vol. i. p. 60.

² See for comparison of the various views Outram, *De Sacri-*

stated: for if by a Divine institution was meant an ordinance enjoined by formal command, the question resolved itself "into a historical problem never likely to obtain a solution."¹ The Bible itself affords no help towards settling the difficulty when so presented; but the Bible does enlighten and direct us to the true conclusion when the question is rightly formulated. For we are instructed by the Bible, that whatever is really human is originally Divine, and so if the universality of sacrifice indicates a human necessity or disposition, sacrifice must be regarded as a Divine institution. But not because it was inaugurated by any Divine external command. Man required no such command to begin to sacrifice; the disposition to do so was always within him and would be evoked by the conditions under which he lived and by the events which befel him. He was indeed instructed by a primeval revelation, for although it was not communicated in audible voices or by visible signs, it was legibly inscribed upon the constitution of his being. In this respect sacrifice is akin to other Divine institutions essential to the education of man. The family, social and civil government, indispensable to man's well-being as defending him from the degradation of the brutes and providing for his proper development, are Divine institutions. Yet in the Bible their origin is never ascribed to any positive Divine

ficis, book i. c. 1; Warburton, *Divine Legation of Moses*, book ix. c. 2; Deyling, *Observat. Sacra*, ii. p. 53 seq.

¹ Herzog, *Encycl.*, ii. p. 1684; Smith, *Dictionary of the Bible*, iii. p. 1077.

command; they are regarded as matters of course, the inevitable outcome of man's moral and spiritual instincts. So, like sacrifice, they are represented as being coeval with man, and for this very reason, as being made the subject of much subsequent legislation, in order to discipline them to secure the end which they were originally designed to subserve.¹

And therefore we need not enter minutely into the discussion of another question as to the rationale of sacrifice, seeing that it is really involved in the question as to its origin. We could hope to obtain only an indirect and very partial answer to any inquiry as to what were the feelings, and views, and aims of primitive worshippers in presenting their sacrifices. Of the several competing theories concerning this subject which were formerly in vogue, not one, taken by itself, nor indeed all taken together, though formulated and supported by men of vast learning and great intellectual ability, will account for the whole phenomena. They each explain some of the data in certain stages of religious culture; and so, though distinct from each other, they need not, as covering only a part of the field, be regarded as antagonistic. A more comprehensive survey of the actual state of matters may include them all. The *Gift theory* propounded by Spencer,² and supported by many eminent scholars both on the Continent and in Great Britain, holds good in regard to some aspects of

¹ Maurice, *Sacrifice*, p. 4; Oehler, *Old Test. Theol.*, vol. i. p. 391.

² *De Legibus Hebræorum Ritualibus et earum Rationibus*. Posthumous edition. Cambridge, 1726.

sacrifice. In certain phases of religion men have extensively sought to obtain and to keep the friendship of Deity by oblations from the produce of their fields or by offerings made by sacrificial slaughter from their flocks and herds. It is founded, however, upon a sense of the value of property, and of the worth and efficacy of the gift of a part of it, which, as far as can be gathered from the records of mankind, cannot be regarded as primitive. The conception is rather one which implies a change from an earlier organisation of society, and therefore it is not likely that men began to sacrifice from such a motive or for such an object. The *Federal theory*, advanced and supported with much ingenuity and learning by Mede and Sykes, founding sacrifice upon the intention to enter into, maintain, or restore covenant relations with Deity, is in the same sense, and to a similar extent a sound one.¹ From the widely prevailing custom of contracting leagues between nations by sacrificial feasts, from the use of the Greek word *σπονδή*, signifying a treaty between parties ratified by libation; from the Roman mode of celebrating marriage (*confarreatio*), in which the eating of selected fruits and salted meal was regarded as rendering the bond indissoluble, and from the very general practice of sharing banquets with the dead, we may safely conclude that in the later ages of Gentile nations sacrifice was practised as a solemn rite of federation and communion with the gods. But while this

¹ Sykes, *Essay on the Nature, Design, and Origin of Sacrifice*. London, 1748.

was so, and while the theory illustrates some features even of Jewish sacrifice, we must not infer that sacrifice was originally and universally so employed. The theory does not account for one very prominent class of sacrifices, the "holocaust" of which the sacrificer never partook, and it ignores or vainly endeavours to explain away the whole of that important group of sacrifices in which we are chiefly concerned, viz. the piacular or expiatory.¹ Warburton, in the *Divine Legation of Moses*,² has endeavoured with more success to account for sacrifice as a natural device to aid or supplement the defects of language by symbolic action. His theory has been adopted by many others,³ who think it unnecessary to make any account of the imperfections of language. Regarding "representation by action as gratifying to men who have the gift of eloquence, and as singularly suited to great purposes," they consider that "adoration invested in some striking and significative forms, and conveyed by the instrumentality of material tokens, would be most in accordance with the strong energies of religious feeling." This applies of course to other acts of worship than that of adoration, for whether the motive would be to express gratitude, or penitence, or to supplicate a boon, or to deprecate anger, the intention of the worshipper would naturally be indicated not only by

¹ Fairbairn, *Typology*, vol. i. p. 252 seq.

² Book iv. sec. 4, and book ix. ch. 2.

³ Davison, *Inquiry into the Origin and Intent of Sacrifice*, p. 19; Bähr, *Symbolik*, book ii.; Thuluc, *Appendix to Commentary on Hebrews*.

speech, but in symbolic action more expressive than speech.¹

This theory, conceived on the same principle as the two already alluded to, is but another aspect of the same rationalistic view that sacrifice can be accounted for on purely human or natural grounds.² It need not be regarded with hostility, or even with suspicion, provided we understand that sacrifice is a natural expression of a spiritual or supernatural necessity. Man is distinguished from the world of nature by his religious instinct, that is by his consciousness of not only lateral relations to his fellow-men, his equals, but upward relations to powers and beings superior to himself, and in the higher stages of his religion, to one supreme Being, the Author and Governor of his own existence. The feelings and thoughts originating in this Divine relationship cannot all be expressed by speech or even by action. Man's deepest feelings and highest thoughts are unutterable in words and inexpressible by deeds. Naturally, therefore, and of necessity, he endeavours by actions to supplement his spoken worship, and he makes his approach to Deity with some material offering or symbolic action. Even regarded from the high spiritual standpoint from which we, as heirs of so many centuries of Christian culture, are wont to contemplate things, this cannot appear

¹ Cave, *Scripture Doctrine of Sacrifice*, pp. 31, 41 seq.

² "Nature dictates this symbol to all her children; it being nothing else than a species of worship

in action instead of words, so that sacrifice and religious worship were correlative and coeval ideas."—*Divine Legation*, book ix. ch. ii.

strange to us. We still present our offerings in the worship of God, and we have high authority for believing that, with the sacrifices "of doing good and communicating," God, "who is not in need of anything," "is well pleased."¹ When we recall the conceptions and sentiments which in our childhood we entertained of our relations to Deity, we find nothing very far out of the way in the feeling which constrained men in primitive ages to express in more material forms their worship of Deity. In childhood and youth the mind contemplates the Divine as inseparable from the natural, and regards the spiritual as one with the material and corporeal. And so in primitive religion, yea in all stages of religion, until under the discipline of the Divine Spirit it matured into the religion of Christ, sacrifice has had a place as prominent as that occupied by prayer and praise, with which for very long it has been closely connected. The Bible seems to indicate² that in point of time sacrifice preceded these more spiritual modes of worship, and this is what we might expect in the Divine education of man. "For that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterwards that which is spiritual."³ But that which is spiritual cannot be regarded in this instance as antagonistic to what was natural. It was already contained and enveloped in the natural, and both, though never identified, have been so closely correlated as to be regarded as inseparable. Sacrifice in the old religion, like the

¹ Heb. ch. xiii. 16; Acts xvii.
25.

² Genesis iv. 26.

³ 1 Cor. xv. 46.

sacraments in the new, were ordinances, or rather actions, as essential to worship as prayer and praise. They were not arbitrary or artificial methods of expressing religious emotion for which some other invention might be substituted; they sprang from the very fountain of religion and were intimately connected with its essence. Religion in the case of man must be symbolic; the form may be changed according to his stage of experience, but he cannot outgrow the necessity for it. The feeling in which sacrifice originated, and of which in ancient times it was the symbol, is still the very life and spirit of our religion, the reality in which all that is true in other religions is fulfilled.¹

All these theories as to the origin and rationale of sacrifice are founded upon the idea that the chief, or only constituent of religion is the sense of dependence and inferiority which obliges man to acknowledge and worship deity. Fear undoubtedly, in the higher form of reverence, and in its lower, as dread of powers invisible and dangerous, is one of the principal elements into which religion may be resolved. But there is another constituent of religion as essential to it as is

¹ Sacrifice is not to be regarded as just an "embodied prayer," but something different from prayer though conjoined with it. "Instead of corresponding to prayer as symbol to idea, sacrifice ran parallel to and accompanied it."—Compare Bähr, *Symbolek*, book ii. 272; Oehler, *Old Test.*

Theol., vol. i. p. 396; Outram, *De Sacrificiis*, book i. p. 238; Cave, *Scrip. Doctrino of Sacrifice*, p. 51; Hengstenberg, *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, p. 378; Kurtz, *Sacrificial Worship of the Old Testament*, p. 58; Delitzsch, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, vol. ii. p. 392.

the sense of dependence, which has not been sufficiently taken into consideration, and that is the sense of affinity subsisting between man and the being or beings that he worships. Invisible though these be they are never regarded as wholly unknown. Though in many respects strange they are not conceived of as alien, but as akin to their worshippers. In most of the lower forms of religion this belief is very clearly expressed. The relation of the god to the tribe, or to the community, is regarded as one not of concord only but of kith. He is supposed to be interested in all that concerns their fortunes, as actually one of themselves. He is believed to be their common head, in a very literal sense. Renan's assertion that "dread is the sole root of religion," is thus contradicted by the beliefs of even the most degraded peoples. To them in very many instances the god instead of being a terror is a familiar and friendly power, living not only close to, but among them. It is only in certain stages of religion that the gods are conceived of as far removed from men, and as requiring to be conciliated on account of their power to promote or to mar their happiness.

This feeling of affinity, expressed in the quotation from Aratus by St. Paul on Mars Hill,¹ meets us in the very earliest account given in Genesis of the origin of man. In the words, "let us make man in our image, after our likeness," we have the most sublime conception of human dignity and destiny that has ever been formulated. According to the author of Genesis

¹ Acts xvii. 28.

man is not animated flesh acting automatically like the animals; he is living soul inspired by his Creator and capable of being trained into His likeness. There is in his constitution a Divine element, in virtue of which he is subject to God as the Father of his spirit. This conception of fatherhood, however, is separate from that of Aratus as the heavens are separate from the earth. The Gentile thought was derived from the belief that God exists in the likeness of men. "He is the superlative of man, who is the positive."¹ By the author of Genesis this would have been condemned as blasphemy. God was not to be conceived of by him in the likeness of any one; and if man be God's child, it is not by natural descent as *born*, but by creation as *made* in His image. Sonship is a relation not of nature but of grace. The Hebrew prophets while proclaiming Jehovah as the Father of Israel carefully guarded against all possible misconception of the relationship. The surrounding heathen might say to their idol stock, "thou art my father, to a stone, thou hast brought me forth,"² but Israel revered Jehovah not as a Father who had begot them, but as the "Most High who had created them,"³ a nation over all other nations, by His Divine intervention. Jehovah is God, and Israel are men the work of His hands.⁴ They are His creatures, yet as spiritually related to Him they are capable of knowing, communicating with, and receiving revela-

¹ Baring Gould, *Origin and Development of Religious Belief*, i. 149.

² Jeremiah ii. 27.

³ Isaiah xliii. 1.

⁴ Prof. Robertson Smith, *Religion of Semites*, pp. 42, 43.

tions from Him. That is the fundamental dogma of Scripture, that God has made man in affinity with Himself—a kindred being, not only capable of conversing with God, but actually enjoying and profiting by the privilege. We cannot conceive a moment in human history when God was shut off from communicating with man, or when man was excluded from converse with God.¹

Religion on its Divine side thus implies revelation; revelation implies personal concern of the Infinite for the finite, paternal relationship and affection and care.² On its human side religion, as rooted in man's sense of affinity with the Author of his being, upon whom he is dependent, represents man's aspiration and endeavour

¹ It is a significant fact that this sense of affinity with duty is thus found not only in the higher philosophic religion of Greece, but in the very lowest forms of religion. Although most grotesquely and hideously expressed, it proves that man can never lose the conviction stamped originally upon his nature that he is not essentially evil. Then when the Gospels are interpreted in the light of the early chapters of Genesis the Incarnation is found to be not the makeshift which theology has sometimes propounded it to be—a Divine expedient to bring the Holy God into contact with a race that had sinned. The Incarnation is grounded upon the perfect fitness of man as made in God's image to be the utterer of

God's life. The theory of the Scotists commends itself thus as worthy of more consideration than it has received. Founding their theology upon God, not upon man, beginning not from our sinful selves and so "measuring God's straight line by our crooked one," but accepting the teaching of Scripture that all good proceeds from God who is ever revealing Himself to man, they maintain that the Incarnation was no afterthought conceived to meet the necessities of a sinful race. By reason of human sin the method of it may have been modified, but "etiam si non peccasset homo, deus tam esset incarnatus."—West., *Christ. Consum.* p. 104; Maurice, *Sacr. introd.* p. xli.

² Hitchcock's *Sermons*, p. 83.

to improve his relationship into that close and perpetual fellowship with God for which he was created. Yielding to his inward necessities, man naturally and spontaneously will express in his worship his craving for this communion with God. The homage which he renders could have no value apart from its spontaneity. Man is not compelled to worship God on account of the rudeness or wickedness of his nature, but in virtue of his inalienable affinity he finds it impossible to abstain from seeking through worship that fellowship which is the Divine ideal of his destiny. So, though in Scripture sacrifice is found linked to the first step in the degradation of the race, in the general sense of offering it can be conceived of as having a far earlier date in human history than the fact of sin, with which it has had so intimate a connection. Had sin never entered the world, human history would have been one of perpetual ascent toward the supreme holiness by an ever-increasing experience of the Divine life maintained by continuous self-surrender to the Divine will. Giving himself to God untainted by disobedience, involved the offering of all he had and did. So his "life of fearless intercourse would have been a continual oblation saintly."¹

But nowhere in the world, and at no period of human history, and by no member of the race, has the life of fearless intercourse and perfect communion with God been realised. Everywhere and

¹ Cave, *Scripture Doctrine of Dei*, book xx. chap. 25; Oehler, *Sacrifice*, p. 183; Dale, *The Atonement*, p. 421; Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, book xx. chap. 25; Oehler, *Old Testament Theology*, i. p. 396.

always we are confronted by the confession that fellowship with God has been broken by human sin. In one form or another this confession is expressed in all the religions of mankind; and it is stamped plainly upon all the categories under which the different varieties of sacrifice have been classified. Theoretically we may divide them into honorific and piacular, and subdivide them under various heads, but practically they all spring from the consciousness that union between man and Diety has been interrupted, and that before fellowship can be maintained, it must be reknt and restored. So in the history of religion the piacular sacrifices have been of peculiar and prime importance. To them the word sacrifice, answering in its ordinary metaphorical use to the reluctant surrender of an object of value, chiefly applies, and all of them involve the surrender of a life, or of its substitute. All such sacrifices, therefore, clearly indicate how deeply imprinted upon the human conscience is the conviction that man is not what he ought to be, that he is in a state of alienation from God; and yet, at the same time, they testify to man's earnest desire and endeavour to effect at any cost reconciliation with Him. So instead of regarding sacrifice, and especially piacular sacrifice, as Renan describes it, "as the oldest and most serious error, the one most difficult to eradicate among those bequeathed to us by the state of folly through which humanity passed in its infancy,"¹ we are forced to consider it as an apt and fitting confession of the existence in humanity of

¹ *History of the People of Israel*, i. p. 43.

a foreign element—sin, which, however introduced, has immensely weakened the whole life of the race, and impeded its advance in good; and also as an earnest appeal and effort, justified by the facts and the results as wisely directed, that this primeval curse should be eliminated and destroyed.¹

We propose to consider some of the most salient or characteristic of the sacrificial rites of mankind, with the view of discovering the beliefs which inspired or suggested them. Our survey will not be confined to the very wide field of the religions which reflect a high degree of civilisation, and which are testified to by great literatures and monuments. It will extend to what of the wastes of humanity have been discovered

¹ The remarkable positions taken up by Dr. Priestley (*Theological Repository*, i. pp. 401 seq., 214) that no nation, Jewish or Christian, ancient or modern, appears to have had the least knowledge, or betrayed the least sense of their want of any expedient of satisfaction for sin besides repentance and a good life, and that all ancient and modern religions appear to be utterly destitute of anything like a doctrine of proper atonement, has only to be stated to disclose its absurdity. We can hardly conceive it possible for him to have made so bold an assertion had he enjoyed the advantage we possess of reading the sacred books of India, China, Persia, Assyria, and Egypt; and

yet he was well acquainted with Greek and Roman literature, the phrasology of which is steeped in ideas of propitiatory atonement. Then the whole Jewish system, as contained in the Old Testament and expounded by the rabbin, is based upon belief in atonement. Of course the opinions of the rabbin may be absurd, and the whole Jewish system may be based on error, but there can be no question as to the facts. The very authorities which he quotes in support of his theories are found, when examined, to be in direct contradiction to them. See Magee, *Essays and Dissertations on the Atonement*, vol. i. 124 seq., and 254 seq.; Outram, *De Sacrificiis*, p. 261 seq.

by patient modern research, in which are found only coarse superstitions and repulsive customs, the outcome of ideas as to the constitution of the natural and spiritual world, which may strike us as most irrational and absurd. We dare not, however, on that account pass them by. No believer in the great Scripture truth of the organic unity of the human race ought to consider any form of religion too low for his interest, or even for his respect. The religious rites of the most degraded peoples are deserving of study. To despise or ignore the very lowest of them would be as unbecoming in a theologian, "as it would be for a physiologist to vaunt his ignorance of the lower forms of life."¹ It is not as matter of curious research into what is so far beneath our present level of faith that we ought to pursue our investigation into the crudities of savage beliefs. We may find it an important practical guide to the study of our religion, and a help by no means to be despised in determining what of our creed is to be considered essential, and what non-essential to the faith. The observation is already trite, that we shall never properly appreciate our religion if we do not study the other religions that have preceded, or that may still profess to compete with it. Certainly we shall never rightly understand the sacrifices of Israel described in the Bible if we are ignorant of the sacrificial customs that prevailed among the surrounding heathen. It is only thus that we can realise the true significance of the election of the seed of Abraham as a people divinely

¹ Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, i. pp. 20, 280.

separated from all nations, and specially educated to become the religious teachers of all mankind.¹

Further, even savage sacrifices, regarded in the light of the Divine purpose revealed in Scripture and now being fulfilled through the religion of Christ, may be found to exhibit some of the really typical elements of which we are in search. The partial can only be rightly understood in the completed whole, and in the higher is always found the true interpretation of the lower. The intelligent man understands the prayer which the child unconsciously prattles. The Jewish people, though children compared with ourselves, could enunciate clearly truths of religion which enlightened Gentiles could only babble. "After last comes first," and "we find the key to the beginning in the end, not the key to the end in the beginning." We who live in the fuller light of the Gospel, understand the religions both of the Jews and the Gentiles better than they did themselves. In sacrificing, the worshippers were unable to account distinctly for what they were doing; different reasons for the same sacrifice would be given by different sacrificers, while of the majority it may be truly said that, just as men pray long before they begin to theorise about prayer, so they sacrificed because they felt they must. What gave meaning to their actions lay more or less obscurely in the background of their minds; but we, contemplating them from a higher level, understand the drift at least of many things which they did in ignorance. Without reading into their beliefs our

¹ Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, Introd. p. vi.

own convictions, we apprehend somewhat of the truth after which, in less favourable conditions, they could only grope. Then again, we must not forget that the revelation contained in Scripture presupposes and attaches itself to a primitive and fundamental revelation which from the beginning of the creation God had given in His works and in man's moral nature.¹ That earlier revelation man, however advanced, has not outgrown, and from it, however degraded, he can never wholly fall away. So, at the foundation of the sanguinary and revolting worship of even savage men, there may be found some fragments of Divine ideas, crude and hideously distorted, which testify of instincts which man can neither wholly lose nor destroy, and which the Creator of man will never disregard. If in his idolatry he was unconsciously seeking after the invisible God, then in his sacrifices he was unintentionally feeling after the Cross of Christ.

The analogies which heathen religions present to Christianity are very striking, and the more these religions are studied the more numerous are found to be the parallels in legend and doctrine and precept subsisting between them. From the earliest days of the Church it has been a favourite part of the tactics of its assailants to endeavour by the production of these parallels to rob the Gospel of its significance as a Divine revelation, seeing so many of its truths had already been discovered by the unassisted efforts of the human mind. We are coming to understand these things better than we did; we have a clearer and more correct perception of the

¹ Romans i. 20; Colossians i. 26, ii. 2.

significance of revelation and inspiration, and we can utilise in defence and confirmation of the faith the very facts which suggested the charges at the first and gave them currency.¹ If the Gospel be truly revelation, we may and ought to find not only types and prophecies of it in the antecedent Jewish economy, but parallels and analogies which are really anticipations and testimonies of it, in every form of religion. From most unexpected quarters witness may be borne to us of the things most firmly believed among us. We may listen to "voices of the prophets"² other than Hebrew, in heathen sayings that were dark and incomprehensible, in parables that were perplexing and enigmatic to those who first spake and to those who first heard them. "Because not unto themselves but unto us they did minister the things that are now declared to us, by those who have preached the Gospel with the Holy Spirit sent from Heaven."³

We shall, however, make a great mistake if we seek among heathen sacrifices for only resemblances to those described in the Bible, and for indications of beliefs analogous to those which we hold ourselves. In the contrasts and contradictions presented by these sacrifices, we are more likely to discover the clue which will direct us to the universal element in religion of which we are in search.⁴ It is not that which is common to paganism and Judaism which is most truly catholic, but precisely that in which Christianity differs from both. In the very points in

¹ Trench, *Hulsean Lectures*, p. 151, second edition, 1847.

² Acts xiii. 27.

³ 1 Peter i. 12.

⁴ Caird, *Introduction to Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 82-83.

which the Bible traverses the sacred scriptures of other religions we are likely to find the catholic truth. Applying this principle to the sacrifices of all religions we shall find that while they have much in common, there are certain broadly marked features which distinguish the sacrifices described in the Bible, and these if carefully observed will point us to some very important conclusions.

In every religion sacrifice is assumed to be an essential part of worship, and the rites through which it is offered are subject to minute regulations in order to secure its efficacy; but when we compare these regulations with the legislation contained in the Bible, the fact becomes manifest that in the worship of Israel the sacrificial instinct was put under restraints of which there are few or no traces in the rituals of other religions. Everywhere else the disposition to sacrifice was not only allowed, but encouraged to develop itself with freedom; but in the religion represented by the Bible it was bridled, and was limited to bounds which it could not pass without sacrilege. Excess of what was prescribed was as criminal as was neglect or refusal to provide what was required. All through the whole system there is an apparent intention to correct the extravagances to which the religious instinct is prone, and to discipline and educate it to high moral ends. Warburton has correctly remarked that "Of all customs in use among men, those respecting religion are the most liable to abuse." "Sacrifices designed to be eucharistic or propitiatory are imagined to receive their chief value from their numbers and the costliness of the offerings,

and in all sacrifices of an expiatory import, the predominating passion of fear soon superadds strange enormities to the follies of the worshippers."¹ This statement finds ample illustration in the sacrifices not only of barbarous peoples, but of peoples equal to, and in some respects more advanced in civilisation than the Israelites. In India, China, and Egypt religion comprehended an enormous body of sacrifices with a ritual so comprehensive and minute as to take possession of the whole life of the individual. In the religions of Greece and Rome, hecatombs appear to have been the rule whenever circumstances rendered them possible, or when ambition or self-interest or fear seemed to demand them. Now it is true that upon exceptional occasions, such as the bringing of the ark to Jerusalem,² the enthronement of Solomon,³ and the consecration of the Temple,⁴ we do read in the Bible of enormous sacrificial slaughter. We must not forget, however, that on all such occasions the victims represented the materials of a great national feast, and that, in any case, they were not required by the demands of the sacrificial code which has come down to us. The requirements of that code, as we have it in the last of its successive revisions, though extensive and extravagant according to our standard, were moderate when compared with what was demanded in the religions of India and Egypt, or in that of Rome in the times of the Cæsars.⁵

¹ *Works*, ed. 1811, vol. vi. p. 281.

² 2 Samuel vi. 13.

³ 2 Chron. i. 6.

⁴ 1 Kings viii. 63.

⁵ Clarke, *Ten Great Religions*, p. 319; Kalisch, *Com. Lev.*, i. p. 308.

Thus was it that in the religion of the Bible the world was spared the enormity of legalised human sacrifice, and the fact is remarkable seeing that the custom was elsewhere universal. No other nation than Israel that has left any record of itself can escape the reproach of having not only permitted human sacrifice, but as having stamped it with such approval as is implied in regulations framed for its being offered.¹ From the Bible it would appear that it must be laid to the charge of individual Israelites. Thus Jephthah, a half heathen outlaw, in a time of political and religious anarchy, in fulfilment of a rash pledge, on a very exceptional occasion did once what was customary among neighbouring nations.² It is also recorded as one of the dark blots upon the character of David that he took advantage of the heathen demand of the Gibeonites to "hang up before Jehovah for an atonement" the seven sons of Saul. This, however, he did from no religious conviction, but as an expedient for ridding himself of the surviving and dangerous scions of the preceding dynasty whom he was pledged by the most solemn oath to spare and to protect.³ In the calamities consequent upon their apostasy moreover, not only individuals but whole sections of the people appear to have fallen away into the abominable practice.⁴ It is admitted, however, by one most anxious to prove that the Israelites were addicted to it, that "not many

¹ Magee, *Discourses and Discertations*, i. 96.

² Judges xi. 34-40.

³ 1 Sam. xxiv. 22, 23; 2 Sam. xxiv. i. *seq.*

⁴ Ps. cvi. 37-38; Is. lvii. 5.

clear cases are mentioned.”¹ And the fact is unquestionable that instead of being authorised, the custom was branded with the Divine reprobation by the plain enactments of the law, while the prophets from first to last proclaimed the Divine abhorrence of it in any form as unnatural and impious, and predicted as its inevitable punishment, the sorest disasters.²

The practice was in direct contradiction to one of the fundamental articles of the faith which separated the Israelites from the surrounding heathen. The heathen conceived of man as an integral part of nature, but according to the Bible idea, man was made in the image of the Creator and Ruler of nature. In heathen sacrifice the victim often represented the god, or was supposed to be in close affinity with him; in Jewish sacrifice the victim represented the worshipper, from whom, although his substitute, it was essentially distinct. In heathendom

¹ Ghillany, *Die Menschenopfer der alten Hebräer*, Nürnberg, 1842, pp. 31, 492, 518.

² Kalisch, *Com. Lev.*, i. p. 381 *seq.*, specially p. 408 *seq.*, and Oehler, *Herzog Real-Encycl.*, xvi. p. 621, effectively dispose of the “toll gewordene Kritike eines Ghillany”; Kurtz, *History of the Old Civ.*, Clarke ed., vol. i. p. 260, as effectively exposes the pretensions of a similar work. Daumer, *Der Feuer- und Molochdienst der Alten Hebräer*. Voltaire (*Oeuvres*, tom. xiii. p. 227, eighth edition, 1756), has charged the Jewish law with sanctioning human sacrifice in Lev. xxvii. 29, and he has main-

tained that Jephthah sacrificed his daughter in fulfilment of that law. Bryant also, in his observations and inquiries into ancient history, has derived the custom from the sacrifice of Abraham. Both conclusions are flatly contradicted by express prohibitions of the law and the denunciations of the prophets. Warburton, *Works*, vol. vi. pp. 357, 362 *seq.*, has very ably settled the matter with Voltaire, “whose ignorance of the law of Moses might well have been excused had he forborne to abuse what he did not understand, but to know his Virgil no better was indeed a disgrace.”

the god is simply a deification of some power or phase of nature of which he is only an emanation. Instead of ruling nature he is involved in it and subject to its destiny. In heathen sacrifice the victim was offered with the intention of controlling what in the system of nature the sacrificer desired to bend to his will. Now all such conceptions were most rigidly excluded from the monotheistic creed represented by the "law and the prophets." In it everything was avoided which could refer even remotely to the deification of nature. In whatever stage we regard it, whatever be the dimness resting upon the idea of God, the worshipper whether he be Abraham or Moses or the last Isaiah is ruled by the thought that he has to do in his worship with the Creator and Governor of nature whose will cannot be forced. And it is the exclusion of such heathen conceptions from the creed of Israel, and the presence in it of these essentially higher ideas of the nature of Deity and of man which explain the entire absence from the worship of Israel of the slaughter of human life. What among the heathen was the highest form of piety, a service most acceptable and efficacious, was in Israel a detestable and horrid sacrilege to be visited by the extremest penalty.

In the same way we can account for the prohibition in the worship of Israel of such sacrifices as were represented by the prostitution of women,¹ the mutilation of the persons of the priests,² and other customs not only permitted but actually demanded in many

¹ Herod., i. 181 *seq.*; Strabo, xi., xiv. 16.

² Creuzer, *Symbol.*, ii. 367 *seq.*

other religions. Revolting as they are to us, they were the natural fruit of beliefs prevalent in physiolatry and polytheism. In that phase of religion man's conception of a god is that of a being or person not immoral, but rather non-moral, like nature from which he emanates. So in mythology, which may be described as the creed of polytheism, the ethical element is not represented at all, and from its worship the moral nature got almost nothing to support it. In the most cultured forms of polytheism, religion was totally dissevered from morality. The wisdom of Greece, represented by the philosophers and poets, was forced to separate ethics from theology, for the religious idea was often seen by them to override the moral sentiment, or almost to expel it from the conduct. Worship demanded, as in the instances just referred to, what morality condemned. In the Bible religion this was simply impossible, for the God of the Bible is not a personification of nature, wayward, and immoral, and capricious. He is just and righteous and true, and what He is His worshippers feel they ought to be. This fundamental idea of Deity therefore can only be expressed in a religion essentially ethical. Worship alike of prayer or sacrifice can only be acceptable and efficacious when prompted by sincere conviction of the unchanging righteousness of God, and offered for the moral and spiritual end of purifying and changing the worshipper into a nearer likeness to God.

So again the sacrifices described in the Bible are distinguished from those of all other religions by an

essentially higher intention and motive. In all other religions sacrifice was conceived of as a purely physical means of averting some evil, or of securing some good. Even when not regarded as a means of controlling natural processes, but as likely to propitiate or deprecate the displeasure of the powers that govern men's lives, sacrifice was based upon the principle of *quid pro quo*. Its chief intention was to secure the interest of the sacrificers by lowering the gods to their own narrowness and selfishness, and when the offering was properly rendered there was an end of the matter. But the Law and the Prophets never allowed worshippers to regard their sacrifice as a method of squaring accounts with Deity. It was an expression of homage and a confession of a responsibility of which no offering, however costly, could relieve them. After their sacrifice the responsibility was felt to be greater, for in the sacrifice they surrendered themselves to the Divine Will. Without this surrender the sacrifice was worthless. In no case could they hope to procure God's favour or avert His anger by any offering or sacrifice, however precious. In no stage of religion as presented in the Bible was sacrifice ever permitted to degenerate into a material substitution. The sacrifice to be acceptable must express the entire submission of the offerer, and the value of the sacrifice depended solely upon his sincerity.

The most solemn of all heathen sacrifices were the piacular or expiatory, but the word expiate signified in heathendom conceptions very different from those

expressed by it in the Bible. It has been truly observed that the heathen knew of no atonement in the Bible sense, and the Bible allowed none in the heathen sense.¹ In heathendom an expiation was intended as a rule to remove or remedy physical evils, or to appease the wrath of the offended deities. The Bible sanctioned only such as would by repentance secure the removal of moral and spiritual evils and bring the suppliant into conformity with the righteous will of God. Almost universally in heathen religions the sense of sin was very slight. Transgression consisted in withholding from the gods what was their due, and what man found it was expedient for their interest to render. It was more a mistake than a fault, for if the gods were not supported they could not be serviceable to man. Among the higher forms of polytheistic religion a piacular sacrifice was conceived as a fine, which once paid made an end of responsibility for transgression. All such ideas are not only foreign to the Bible, they are distinctly contradicted and condemned by it. The Israelites were instructed that it was their sin against the Holy Jehovah which required covering or atonement, and they were never permitted to imagine that the payment of any fine could wipe out a transgression, or that the Divine anger because of it could be appeased by the blood or the fat of thousands of the costliest victims.

¹ Kalisch, *Com. on Levit.*, vol. i. p. 316. Compare his chapter on "The sacrifices of the Hebrews compared with those of other Nations," vol. i. pp. 202-213.

From the descriptions given by classical writers of the Greek and Roman sacrifices,¹ some have inferred that the necessity for a right disposition and for a good intention was as distinctly expressed in their rituals as it was in that of Israel. The hands and the garments of the sacrificers were washed and purified with clean water, while the victim had to be similarly purified along with all the materials required for the solemn function. "No one of impure hands should be within the place where the holy vessels were." When the priest was ready to do his office, all profane people were warned by the public crier to depart (*procul este, profani*; *θύρας βέβηλοι*), and all who remained were enjoined to take care of their words (*favete linguis, eὐφμεῖτε*), then, when only the lustrated were present, the priest laying hold of the altar, made earnest supplication, and he that brought the sacrifice repeated the sacred formula after the priest.

"Dictaque verba

Protulit, ut mos est."

We must beware, however, of interpreting such a ritual by our own ideas and sentiments. As matter of fact the proclamation made at the beginning was intended to guard against the presence of any sinister influence. The words which the people were warned not to utter, were not wicked words, but such as in accordance with the belief of the times might be

¹ Dionys. Halic., lib. vii. ; 219 ; vi. 124 ; Brissonius, *De Lucian, De Sacrificiis* ; Juvenal, *Formulis*, p. 9. *Sat.* vi. 390 ; Virgil, *Æn.* iv.

easily construed into an evil omen. To prevent and to drown the hearing of such inopportune utterances, flute-players used to perform during the ceremony. It must be borne in mind that public worship in our Christian sense was unknown even in cultured Greece and Rome. The people who assembled in front of the temple, which, as the shrine or dwelling of the god, they were not permitted to enter, took no share whatever in the service. As a rule their presence at acts of ceremonial worship was quite a matter of indifference; they attended only as spectators, as they did at the games in the circus. Upon great public occasions, the priests, in presence of certain state officials, did everything, and upon any other occasion the sacrifice was offered, and the service was performed by the priest for and on behalf of the offerer, not with him.¹

While thus guarding against too favourable an interpretation of the *rituals* of ancient heathen worship, we must freely admit that in heathen literature ideas concerning sacrifice akin to those expressed in the Old Testament found frequent utterance. It is to be feared that sufficient justice to heathen religions has not always been done by the expounders of Christianity. Some of them have not realised that in order to prove Christianity to be Divine, we do not require to prove all heathenism to be inhuman. There were "ethics before there were Christian ethics"; the innate moral sentiment was sure to assert itself, when educated with

¹ Uhlhorn, *Christian Charity in the Ancient Church*, p. 29.

sufficient strength, in testing both religious beliefs and observances. If the system of sacrifice among the Israelites is to be interpreted by the teachings of their psalmists and prophets, it is but fair that heathen systems should be interpreted by the utterances of their poets and philosophers. A large volume could be filled with precepts and maxims culled from heathen literature testifying that the sacrifices of the immoral are of no value, and that an acceptable sacrifice implies that the sacrificers must be pure in heart and upright in mind. Not only did grave sages like Plato,¹ Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, insist that a right moral disposition in the offerer was essential to a proper sacrifice, but play-writers and satirists like Aristophanes Plautus² and Persius, and comedians on the stage like Menander publicly testified, "How vain it was to attempt to propitiate the gods by sacrifices of bulls and kids, by garments of purple, by images of ivory and emerald, instead of by refraining from adultery, theft, murder, and covetousness."³ Many similar testimonies almost as precise and as fervent as those of Micah and Asaph to the effect that the Deity delights only in righteous works, and regards as His true sacrifice, constant justice, and purity not of the raiment but of the heart,

¹ *E.g.*, *Alcib.*, ii. 13; *Legg.*, iv. 8; ii. 9, 11; *Xen., Memor.*, i. 3; *Seneca, De Beneficiis*, iv. 9; *Epist.*, 95; *Lucian, De Sacrificiis, passim*; *Porphyry, De Abstin.*, ii. 37; *Cicero, De Nat. Deor.*, lib. ii.

² *Plautus, Rud.*, Prolog. 22-25;

Ovid, Trist., lib. ii. i. 75, 76; *Fast.* ii. 535; *Epist.*, xx. 181; *Horace, Od.*, lib. ii., xvii. 32.

³ For many other authorities see Farrer, *Paganism and Christianity*, p. 87 *seq.*; Sykes, *Essay on Sacrifice*, p. 51 *seq.*, p. 82 *seq.*, p. 311 *seq.*

reach us from the sacred books of the great religions of the East. The early Christian apologists would have hailed all such as are now available for us with thankfulness. From their writings alone we could obtain the materials for constructing a large Greek or Roman moral anthology.¹ In defending and confirming the faith, they delighted to employ weapons drawn from the armoury of heathen literature. Out of the mouths of Gentile philosophers and poets they exposed the absurdity of all pagan attempts by sacrificial worship to propitiate Deity. In this respect, they were simply following the example of the writers of the Hebrew Bible, for one of them in sublime catholicity represents no Hebrew but the heathen Balaam as protesting "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"²

All this may be thankfully admitted as bearing witness that the essentially moral nature of man can and will survive the oppression of an immoral system of belief or of worship. We must remember, however,

¹ Clem., *Strom.*, 606; August., *De Civ. Dei*, xix. 23; Eusebius,

Præp. Evang., almost *passim*.

² Micah vi. 6, 7, 8.

that these were the sentiments and convictions of the few. The vast majority sacrificed in the belief that the *opus operatum* was efficacious, that all that required attention was the correct performance of the rite and the exact utterance of the formula. Among the Israelites, on the other hand, the common people were instructed by the priests and the Levites that not the offering but the offerer was of most account in the Divine esteem. This truth from the very first was imbedded in their ritual, and consequently from the first their observance of it exercised a beneficial influence upon their spiritual culture. In other religions sacrificial worship hindered rather than helped the development of the moral and spiritual nature. When a heathen man's conceptions became purer he revolted from his religion because its beliefs were absurd and its rites were contemptible ; but among the Israelites the healthier the moral sentiment became, and the higher grew their ideas of what was befitting a man, the more their worship commended itself to them as Divinely inspired and ordained.

For once more, the chief distinction between the biblical and the heathen systems of sacrifice may thus be formulated. The heathen expressed man's endeavour to find out and conciliate Deity, the biblical symbolises sinful man's surrender in trust to God who had found him out. In whatever stage of development or degradation we examine other religions we shall find sacrifice practised with the view either of propitiating the gods, or of forcing them to yield to the will of the sacrificer,

or of enabling him to become as powerful, or even more powerful, than they.¹ Sacrifice is rooted in the belief that man can and must work out his own salvation ; so, by the surrender of a part of what belongs to him, he either purchases a greater good, or is able to retain something which, prized as more valuable, he wills not to part with, or he secures exemption from a penalty which he knows he has incurred. Sacrifice thus instead of implying self-surrender, and binding the sacrificer to the will of Deity, is made the minister of man's selfwill, as hindering the gods to serve him. Instead of yielding himself up to God for His service, he endeavours rather to oblige the gods to surrender to him.² We are witnesses to ourselves that this is so, for even after we have become subject to Christ, against His plainest teaching the tendency in our nature breaks forth in endeavours to make religion minister to our lower interests, and advance our selfish aims. The natural man, who is simply the old heathen man, dies hard in regenerate humanity, and even when he is slain he is long in falling away from the life that is being sanctified.

It will be observed that when in the higher forms of heathen religion men have attained to the conviction that the most acceptable offering to Deity is right knowledge and true obedience, it is always conjoined with the belief that man by searching can find out Deity, and does possess in himself all the resources

¹ Fairbairn, *Studies in the Philos. of Relig. and Hist.*, p. 136.

² Maurice, *Sacrifice*, Introd. xliii. seq.

required for perfect obedience. The spirit of cultured heathendom is strongly self-sufficient and self-assertive, and by heathen philosophy these qualities, instead of being condemned, were encouraged and commended as virtuous and praiseworthy. "As it behoves Zeus to know that he is great in himself and in his life, and to speak highly of his own worth, so it behoves good men to do the like, convinced that Zeus is not superior to them."¹ With still prouder self-reliance, Aristotle² held "that magnanimous is the man who estimates his own worth highly, for he who makes too low an estimate of it is a fool." In the same self-assertive spirit Seneca³ reminded men that philosophy promised to elevate them to equality with the gods. They could only, it was true, rise by virtue, which consisted in "the worship of God and the love of men"—*colere divina, humana diligere*; "but by the attainment of virtue men begin to be the companions and not the suppliants of the gods. The way, moreover, is safe and pleasant, and one for which nature has equipped you, for if you but hold fast to what she has given you, you will rise to be equal with Deity."

We are not discussing the effect of this proud reliance upon human nature, this confidence in its capacity to fulfil its ends, upon the general character and conduct of men. Cases are conceivable in which it may have served as a powerful incentive to good, and as a strong safeguard against moral debase-

¹ Plut., *De Stoic. Repugn.*, c. 13.

² Seneca, *Epistles*, 31, 90; and
De Benef., vii. 3, 4, 6, 10.

³ *Ethic. Nicom.*, vii. iii. 3.

ment;¹ but it is with the fact of it that we have to do, and with the contrast presented by it to the spirit of the religion of Israel. The wisest among the heathen found no necessity for sacrifice, for their religion consisted in knowing and being true to themselves. They had in themselves all that was required for their proper guidance and advancement; they were the arbiters of their actions and the masters of their destinies, and if they conducted themselves so as not to lose their own respect they would force the highest gods to respect them. On the other hand, the wise in Israel confessed that man was not sufficient for himself; he neither knew himself, nor was he able to order rightly the way of his life. To the perfect uprightness which might commend him to the Holy One he could not attain, for "there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not."² "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was evil continually."³ This keen sense of universal and personal unrighteousness, dominated by the belief that man was originally created not in unrighteousness, but in the image after the likeness of God, is one of the most characteristic features of the religion of Israel. Israel's conception of the Divine holiness was purer and loftier, and consequently their sense of human sinfulness was more profound and oppressive, than in the case of any other people. Yet the distance that separated them from God, instead of plunging them into despair, roused spiritual aspiration such as never

¹ Farrer, *Paganism and Christianity*, p. 54.

² Ecclesiastes vii. 20.

³ Genesis vi. 5.

was displayed by any stoic believer in the inherent ability of humanity to realise its ideals. This sense of helplessness and guilt made them long for reconciliation, and hope for it as possible, not because they had any faith in themselves, but because they trusted in God, who was showing them the way. So while the heathen philosopher found no necessity for sacrifice in his religion, the Israelite saint felt that he must have a sacrifice to approach God with, because he could not perfectly obey Him. Heathen worship was rooted in man's confidence in his own ability to gain his end, but the worship of Israel, springing from conscious inability, contrition for sin, and hope in God, was an earnest appeal that God would mercifully undertake for man, and provide a "covering" to hide for ever the iniquity which his conscience could not bear.

The highest heathen conception of religion was expressed by Balaam upon the mountains of Peor. Unto that height the moral consciousness of the best of heathens in individual instances did reach. They came to know what Asaph taught, that God was not altogether a man like themselves, a governor who could be bribed to condone wickedness which was not abandoned but persisted in. It was indeed a very sublime conception, indicating plainly that God in electing Israel had not rejected the Gentiles by withholding from them altogether the light which is the life of men. We must not forget, however, that side by side with the psalm ascribed to Asaph is the fifty-first, one peculiarly representative of the religion of Israel.

The man who produced it was the best type of the human race, for he was only one of unnumbered multitudes who vainly endeavoured to wash out his sense of sin by lustration, and to pacify his conscience by sacrifice. Despairing of finding any sacrifice of his own which would appease God, unto him it was revealed that God had provided an acceptable sacrifice in his "broken spirit and contrite heart." In lamenting and confessing "against Thee, Thee only have I sinned," he was really offering what God had prepared in him, by destroying his self-reliance and humbling his pride that he might trust in the living God. When he realised that he had nothing belonging to him but his sin, he was in a condition in which he was qualified to receive what God alone could create and renew in him, "the clean heart and the steadfast spirit." So he found that it was not by doing anything for God, nor by giving anything to God, but by yielding himself up to God, and accepting what God had prepared, that there was restored unto him the assurance of God's favour and the joy of His salvation.¹

The fifty-first psalm is the divinely-provided commentary which interprets the system of sacrifice described in the Old Testament. With all its limitations, and notwithstanding all their misuse of it, that system very powerfully convinced Israel of the sinfulness of man, and of his evil condition because of his sinfulness. Then, over and against this conviction it clearly exhibited the truth that though man has alienated himself

¹ Maurice, *Sacrifice*, p. 94.

from, and cannot justify himself before God, God wills to forgive and redeem him, and has initiated, and is making known his process of reconciliation or way of salvation. According to the Bible, sacrifice instead of being man's endeavour to propitiate God, is God's divinely revealed method of atoning or covering man's sin. God and not man is the originator of the acceptable sacrifice. The only sacrifice that can atone or cover sin must be devised, prepared, and consummated by God. The foundation of all reconciliation must be sought for in His eternal will and unchangeable purpose to maintain His order of inflexible holiness, and restore all men to its blessedness. The heathen notion, which alas has too long survived in some theologies, is that God had to be bargained with by man, or by some one acting on man's behalf, to procure His forgiveness. The truth revealed in Scripture "bit by bit," as men were able to receive it, is that God's forgiveness and plenteous redemption are set forth in the sacrifice of Christ as His own sovereign act of grace, for which He is to be everlastingly adored as the Author and Finisher of our faith. Consequently what we learn from the Gospel is not that sacrifice is worthless, but rather that its worth is superlative, as absolutely indispensable in true religion. The dogma to be received and confessed is not that obedience is better than sacrifice, but that true obedience is impossible unless rooted in sacrifice. The sacrifice, however, which bears this fruit of true obedience is neither procured nor offered by man, it is originated and set forth and completed by God. Be-

hind and beneath our "full purpose of and endeavour after new obedience," our repentance must spring from a work of God done for us, to which we can add nothing and from which we can take nothing away. That work is the atonement revealed in the Lamb "slain from the foundation of the world," which so far from being exhibited in the Bible as the procuring cause of God's good will, is revealed as the method which from pure good will He seeks to save from misery a sinful race, and reconcile them to Himself.

The contrasts which we have been considering between the sacrifices described in the Old Testament, and those of all other religions, surely indicate a special dispensation in the case of one people, whereby their religious instinct was divinely disciplined and informed by enlarging disclosures of truth as ages passed. The end of this Divine education was to prepare them to receive and to declare the revelation of the mystery in which all men are concerned. In specially training the people of Israel for this mission the Gentiles were not overlooked. If Jehovah sought to "consecrate" Israel, it was for the sake of the Gentiles that they also might "be sanctified through the truth." We shall endeavour in the next two lectures to indicate in the sacrifices of the great heathen world, from its lowest to its highest grades, some foreshadowings or preparations for the revelation of the sacrifice of God. We hope to show that while the highest heathen minds were providentially led to reach out after the Divine revelation,

there was divinely maintained in the most degraded sections of heathen humanity the capacity to receive it. Coarse and absurd as were their superstitions, and corrupt as were the rites by which they expressed them, they served to furnish ideas, sentiments, a phraseology which formed an intellectual and spiritual mould, rude indeed and defiled and broken, in which the revelation when it was presented to them could be received as readily as it was by the most cultured of mankind. We do not maintain that heathendom was expecting its Messiah; nor do we maintain that the Israelites under their sacrificial system were taught to look forward to the sacrifice which would completely abrogate it. The Israelites in all probability considered sufficient the measure of revelation accorded to them, and whatever they may have expected, they certainly did not expect the revelation which was ultimately given. But we maintain that the economy of the Law and the Prophets was a preparation without which the revelation recorded in the New Testament would not have been possible; and we also maintain that all other religions, if correctly observed, will show that however far men have swerved from the truth, they have not been allowed to fall out of the scope of God's redemptive purpose. At whatever point of development or degradation men confront us, they confess to necessities and beliefs which only the Gospel which fulfils them can interpret. The design of all great movements in Providence is only apparent when the end is reached. And the sacrifice of Christ,

although, as has been truly observed,¹ it was not a sacrifice after any Jewish or Gentile form known to us, does yet so interpret and satisfy all that mankind everywhere sought to obtain by their peculiar and solemn rites, that we can truly say that what Jew and Gentile were unconsciously feeling after was the Divine redemption secured through His blood.

¹ Jowett, *Epistle of St. Paul*, ii. 562.