

SACRIFICE

ITS PROPHECY AND FULFILMENT

THE BAIRD LECTURE 1892-93

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FOR

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THE BAIRD LECTURE FOR 1892-93

BY

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EDINBURGH

DAVID DOUGLAS, 10 CASTLE STREET

1894

TO

The Congregation of St. George's

TO WHOM MANY IDEAS IN THESE LECTURES MUST BE

FAMILIAR

THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED

IN GRATEFUL RECOGNITION OF THEIR GENEROUS SYMPATHY

BY

THEIR MINISTER

PREFACE

WERE I to name all the authors to whom I have been indebted for material assistance in the preparation of the following lectures, I should require a very large list. The theme was suggested more than thirty years ago by Archbishop Trench's *Hulsean Lectures* (1846) upon "Christ the Desire of all Nations, or, the Unconscious Prophecies of Heathendom." That work powerfully impressed me at the time, and it has given direction to much of my reading ever since. It sent me to study the "Εὐαγγελικὴ Προπαρασκευὴ" of Eusebius and other works of the early fathers of the Church; to admire and profit by the vast stores of information available in the magnificent folios of English scholars like Spencer, Selden, Lightfoot, and Warburton, and so it prepared me to welcome with thankfulness the ever multiplying literature which the study of Comparative Religion has produced in our generation. I am not ashamed to confess that the great world of belief and thought represented by the

Pre-Christian and Non-Christian religions has always had for me a peculiar attraction : "*Homo sum ; humani nihil a me alienum puto.*"¹

It should be no surprise to any one to discover that our religion is not marked off and differentiated from all other religions by hard lines of antagonism. It is indeed as distinct from, and as superior to heathenism, as the mountain is unlike to and is above the plain ; but Christianity so reaches down to heathenism, and heathenism so aspires towards Christianity that it is difficult sometimes to say where the plain ends and the mountain begins. This is just what the Founder of our religion and its earliest Apostolic interpreters instructed us to expect. Christianity is a Divine revelation to humanity as a whole ; its fundamental truth is the organic unity of the human race ; and its Divine purpose is the reconciliation of all things unto God by His Son. This revelation is given to us through One who is essentially Divine and thoroughly human. One who manifests not God *and* man, but God *in* man, and man *in* God ; God-Man so truly one, that Man thinks only what God knows, does only what God wills, and desires only what God delights in. "I and the Father are one."²

No believer in the Gospel truth of the unity of humanity, and in God's purpose of "reconciling all

¹ Terence, *Heauton.*, act i. scene 1, line 25.

² John x. 30.

things unto Himself by Christ," need be alarmed at the application, even to religion, of the modern theory of evolution. Like all new theories it is unfortunate in many of its expounders, who find in it only another weapon for running a tilt against "the faith." As rightly apprehended, however, the word evolution describes only a method and not an originating principle. Evolution creates nothing; but creation may proceed through evolution. Evolution at best only explains the ways in which the Creative mind or spirit works, and discloses the stages through which the creative purpose is displayed.¹ The theory is not incompatible with Scripture, which traces the principle of the unity of the world to where modern philosophy under different terms has found it, in the intelligence and will of Deity. Moreover, the idea suggested by it seems to be kindred to, and to follow naturally from, the idea of the unity of humanity. If it be a fact that God "hath made of one blood all nations of men,"² or that God "made of one every nation of men,"³ then it follows that humanity everywhere will testify to or manifest its Divine Original. As matter of fact, humanity does not manifest Him uniformly or always in the same degree. In its lowest grade, that in which he is nearest to the animal, man exhibits traces of

¹ Martineau, *Essays, Reviews, and Addresses*, vol. iv. p. 257.

² Acts xvii. 26.

³ Revised Version.

what is divine: but it is not in that grade, but in the very highest—that in which humanity is seen at its divinest—that there is clearly disclosed what man originally was designed to be. The creative ideal of humanity is thus revealed in Christ, and in that “image,” after that “likeness,” God in this period of the history of the universe is creating man anew, through spiritual regeneration, from a very evil condition. When we consider the facts disclosed in that condition, we find that no other term than “regeneration” can adequately suggest the Divine process: and it seems strange that some who would discard the term from theology, appropriate it in sociology as the only one adequate to describe special human improvement and unexpected national revival.¹ So without accepting or rejecting the theory of evolution in religion, we may regard it without anxiety. Instead of being another difficulty to faith, it may prove to be a real aid to faith. For it may suggest the method whereby the Almighty and Omniscient Worker—whose “years are throughout all generations,” and whose working is not confined to what goes on in this world—will eventually realise His eternal purpose, and prove that

¹ For example, we read of “renaissance” in art or literature, of the “regeneration” of society, and, as in the case of Italy, of the “resurrection” of a nation; yet in the light of Providence, in all

these changes, we are witnesses of an outflow of the same creative spirit which in Christ is recreating the race, and is making all things new.

in spite of man's present evil condition God has "not made man for nought."

In any case, in Christ, towards whose advent "all the movement of the ancient world had been converging," and from whose advent "all the modern world has started,"¹ we have the pledge that however appalling may be the present evil condition of the human race, the most perplexing of the Divine dealings with mankind—or rather the seeming lack of Divine dealing—will be justified by their adaptations and effects when seen in the light of a completed dispensation. To those who believe that God is immanent in, and is divinely directing humanity, the life and death of Christ at first appear to be the most inexplicable of mysteries. Christ's experience of human life seems to indicate the existence of no benign Providence, or if so, of a Providence not regnant as they expected, but defeated and baffled. And yet when contemplated from the standpoint of Christ, we find that out of this greatest darkness of human history light has arisen, in which the Crucifixion is disclosed as the guarantee of Divine victory in the redemption of humanity. It is not the horror but the glory of the Cross that now fills our souls. In that most appalling exhibition of human cruelty and guilt, we find the grandest manifestation of Divine benignity and power. We have revealed in it the real relation of the Creator

¹ Prof. Edward Caird, *The Evolution of Religion*, vol. ii. p. 266.

to the evil that is in His universe; for we learn from it that if God was to be in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, He could not be in Him in any other fashion. It behoved Christ thus to suffer, and in the increasing light which is being shed upon us by that death, and by Christ's resurrection and ascension, we feel that everything inexplicable in Providence has its meaning, and especially that our poor diseased, corrupt humanity is quietly but surely being restored and healed by One who has a balm for its every wound.

These lectures represent a humble but earnest endeavour to exhibit a little of the significance and purpose of the Mission and Passion of Christ, as disclosed by their adaptation to the religious necessities of mankind. They are not meant to form a treatise either upon sacrifice in general, or upon the system of Hebrew sacrifice in particular. Into discussions as to the symbolic and typical import of the Hebrew system of sacrifice they do not enter, for I accept the interpretation given of the religious institutions of the previous economy by the writers of the Old and New Testaments. I have simply attempted to sketch, in popular language, that is, language plain and free from scientific and technical terms, the essential ideas underlying and suggested by the most prominent forms of sacrifice in all grades of religion that we are acquainted with, from the lowest to the highest. My object has been to show

that the desires and beliefs of man at his best, in any and in all stages of religious experience, are really prophecies; and that these prophecies have found, and are increasingly finding, their fulfilment in Christ. He is satisfying the desires of every living man. By the "once offering up" of Himself for our salvation, He has abolished the necessity for material sacrifices and offerings, and yet, by drawing us into fellowship with His sufferings for us, He is rendering imperative to the love in us which His own love has evoked, the perpetual thank-offering of our holy living selves to God. So what seemed for long only a means devised to secure a great and worthy end, is discovered by those who believe in Christ and rest upon Him alone for salvation, to be the highest end of all. For the rule or example of Christ's life is the moral law of the Christian, and this moral law, originating in the being and blessedness of God, is essential and absolute sacrifice.

Very likely I have failed in my object; indeed I am painfully conscious of the defects of my work, which has had to be done in such intervals as could be snatched from a very busy professional life; but surely it is well to have tried. And so, thankful for the opportunity, I venture to send the lectures forth, in the hope that they may help to bring into the lives of others something of the comfort which I have experienced in preparing them.

I record my heartiest thanks to my friend Mr. Campbell of Stracathro, who has generously rendered very valuable assistance in correcting and revising the proofs.

ARCHIBALD SCOTT.

EDINBURGH, 14th December 1898.