

## LECTURE VI

### THE PROPHECY OF SACRIFICE FULFILLED IN CHRIST

THE sacrificial worship of Israel served an important purpose in inspiring powerful convictions of sin and of the necessity for its atonement, and when used in faith in the Divine mercy as a means of grace, it must have helped to pacify the conscience. But only in a certain stage of experience. As the people became more reflective, and as their ideas of the Divine holiness became purer and their sense of human sin grew stronger, the conviction deepened in thoughtful worshippers, when fervently laying their hands upon the heads of their victims and making earnest confession and supplication, that it was not possible that the blood of these sacrifices could atone sin. Nothing could atone sin which did not impart righteousness ; and for this there was required their identification with a sacrifice really representative of themselves. No substitute lower in nature than themselves, incapable of sin and of pitying their sufferings because of it, could be a sufficient atonement. The substitute, moreover, must be sinless, and in the sacrifice nothing must be compulsory, but everything

spontaneous. The very insufficiency therefore of the Levitical ritual fostered the demand for a sublimer sacrifice than that of bullocks or of goats, and pointed forward to a more satisfying faith which was yet to be divulged. These ideas are developed with considerable clearness in the prophetic books, in association with the hope of the coming of the Messiah, and it is essential to the proper elucidation of our subject that we should consider it in relation to that peculiar belief.<sup>1</sup>

The first gleam of the Messianic hope of salvation radiates from the primeval promise of everlasting enmity between the tempter and the seed of the woman, who, though suffering grievously because of the serpent's present success, would eventually vanquish him. Another ray of it shines from the account of the Deluge, where the blessing upon Shem is put against the curse which had fallen upon the race. It was, however, in Abraham and his seed, that the hope of redemption from the primal curse first centred, for through their election all nations would be blessed. Manifestly the idea that

<sup>1</sup> The title "Messiah" is only once used in the Old Testament and twice in the New (Daniel ix. 25; John i. 41, and iv. 25). Its Greek equivalent, however, "Christ," with the definite article prefixed to it in the Gospels, and without it in the Petrine and Pauline epistles, is always applied to our Saviour. It answers to the word "anointed," which in the Old Testament designated those who, like the king and the

high priest, were anointed with the holy oil upon consecration to their office. From this it was applied in the Book of Daniel to the expected Prince of the chosen people who was to accomplish God's purpose for them, and inaugurate the consummation of the kingdom of God. In Him the limited offices fulfilled by anointed ones in Israel were to be combined.

inspired Mosaism was that Israel would be the Messiah; and when in Samuel's time, it had become clear to all that the nation could not fulfil its Messianic functions to the world, the hopes suggested by David's early reign made the faithful look to the monarchy—to which the very title Messiah was applied—as that by which the Divine promise would be realised. Alas! the kingdom failed as completely as the theocracy had failed, and in spite of prolonged prophetic warnings and severe Divine corrections, the Messianic people, because of their apostasy, were crushed and carried into captivity. The chastisement of that humiliation, however, was blessed to the best of the nation, in whom all material or worldly hopes died, and belief arose in a coming king who would restore and purify the "remnant"—the elect people of God—for the good of all mankind. David's sorely humbled son would yet be exalted to reign for ever. Through the very suffering into which the nation had been brought would restoration be achieved, and after them and their glorified king would all nations draw.<sup>1</sup>

Before the captivity truer Messianic intimations seem to have been caught by the higher spirits of Israel. In a time of great depression because of the repeated predictions of judgment which he had to announce, Isaiah was instructed that though that dispensation must end, the covenant would still endure. The nation would be shattered, and the vine which Jehovah had planted and tended for seven hundred years would be uprooted, yet the "holy seed" would

<sup>1</sup> Compare Psalms xvi. xxii. xl., and ii. xxi. cx.

chapter of Isaiah. The vision is not of the nation, unless it be of the ideal nation personified in an ideal individual. Jehovah's sinless "servant" and true prophet to the world is disclosed as serving only in suffering; in bearing, though perfectly innocent, reproach and persecution, and in consummating a sacrifice both of atonement and satisfaction in which he "made intercession for the transgressors." Eleven times in a few verses He is said to have suffered for the iniquities of the very people who turned from Him. It was for their peace this chastisement was laid upon Him, and through His stripes they were healed. In the fortieth Psalm He is set forth as willingly devoting Himself to this vocation, as delighting to do Jehovah's will; and in Psalm twenty-second, it is said that His labour and sacrifice would not be in vain in the Lord. For, while sacrificing His life for the redemption of others, He will live again a new and glorified life, in which His soul shall be rewarded for its travail. All who were astonished at His humiliation will be amazed at His exaltation. For whenever men realise that it was under the burden of their guilt and misery that His heart was crushed, they will begin to feel the shame of their sin and to be smitten into contrition and penitence. So His vicarious sacrifice will effect what punishment had failed to secure; for hardened hearts which judgment could not break will be melted by it into submission and trust.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Driver, *Isaiah, his Life and Times, and the Writings which bear his name*, pp. 40, 42, 94; *Expositor*, November, 1884, p. 350;

Such a prophecy, along with another in Daniel ix. 23—so specific as to the time when the Messiah would be cut off, “but not for Himself”—had great influence in the education of John the Baptist. He was the herald of this dispensation which fulfils, and therefore interprets, what in the former would otherwise be most confusing. Like the pattern of a painted window, when observed from without, the symbols and prophecies of the Old Testament are perplexing because their designs can only be indistinctly traced. When considered from within the shrine of the New Testament, these “figures for the time then present”<sup>1</sup> are discovered to be “examples and shadows of heavenly things.”<sup>2</sup> They bear the same relation to the realities described in the Gospel which figures of speech bear to the facts which they suggest. Upon opening our New Testament, we find in the very beginning of it, in unmistakable clearness, the interpreting testimony that One had appeared in whom all the mysterious symbols and predictions of old time were to find their explanation. The Baptist was their first interpreter, and the inspiration which enabled him to fulfil the office was manifestly caught from and nourished by the prophecies of Isaiah. “It was the gathering up of all the Old Testa-

*Id.* December, p. 430; Dillman, *Isaiah*, p. 472; Dr. G. A. Smith, *Isaiah*, *Expos. Bib.*, ch. liii.

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews ix. 9. The New Testament is the key to the Old, not the reverse. When we understand New Testament facts, and

New Testament teaching regarding them, we are able to explain Old Testament ordinances (*Delitzsch, Com. on Hebrews*, vol. ii, p. 450).

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews viii. 5.

survive.<sup>1</sup> The temple with its shekina enthroned above the cherubim made by human hands would be destroyed, and all ceremonial ordinances of purification would be abolished; but from an eternal altar of sacrifice in the heavenly temple—where Jehovah Himself was enthroned above the adoring seraphim—there would be provided a Divine purification of fire, which would effectually purge away iniquity, and qualify those who experienced it for becoming Jehovah's messengers. So while all that was perishable in the dispensation would be removed, all that was imperishable would be everlastingly established and universally extended, for not one little land but the whole earth would be filled with the glory of the Lord. Thus previous to the Exile, and especially during it, they were being instructed that in all the affliction which had come upon them for their sin Jehovah was involved. Jehovah, who was so jealous that He would "visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations" was no impassible deity pleased only with service and offering. He was jealous because He loved them, and could only be satisfied with their love. Very affectingly did the prophets declare that "He was bearing them as a man doth bear his son,"<sup>2</sup> that He was "pressed down under the weight of their iniquities,"<sup>3</sup> and "broken with their wicked heart."<sup>4</sup> We cannot read these prophetic expostulations and entreaties without being deeply impressed by the fact, that the God of the Old

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah vi.

<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy i. 31.

<sup>3</sup> Amos ii. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Ezekiel vi. 9.

Testament is the same God who is revealed in the New. The element of "jealousy," in the character of Jehovah which is so often adduced as an argument against Old Testament religion is as conspicuous in the Heavenly Father manifested in Christ. The Jehovah who demands in the old economy "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind"<sup>1</sup> is the same who speaks in Christ, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me":<sup>2</sup> "If any man hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."<sup>3</sup> The demand which this jealousy prompts, alike honours man's nature and glorifies God, for it springs from a love that is infinite, and which can only be satisfied with love in return—a love which rejoices in the love of His people and which suffers in their ingratitude. In reading these prophetic threatenings and yearnings over rebellious and apostate Israel, we are listening to the same voice of suffering patience which wept over Jerusalem, and which lamented "Ye will not come unto Me that ye may have life." The just God of the prophets was also their Saviour, afflicted in all their affliction, yea, really enduring in their thoughtless disregard of Himself a sorer passion because of sin than they could endure in its punishment.

This was the revelation that was coming into shape in the sublime prophecy recorded in the fifty-third

<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy vi. 4, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew x. 37.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xiv. 26.

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ment rays of light into the burning glass of that prophet's soul" which fired him with the conviction that "the kingdom of heaven"—the promised rule of Jehovah upon earth—was close at hand. Under the same influence he was forced to proclaim the necessity for inward and outward repentance as the only possible preparation for the manifestation of its Messiah King. It was from the pages of the same prophet that the likeness of the Messiah was most distinctly reflected; and yet how perplexing to him must have been Isaiah's endeavour to suggest the revelation of Him. Isaiah could only do so in contrasts and by antinomies. The Messiah would be most abject, and yet most honoured; forsaken, and yet beloved of Jehovah; vanquished, and yet triumphant. He would be "led as a lamb to the slaughter," and yet be seen travelling "in the greatness of His strength." Supreme in authority He would claim supremacy in service, and while overthrowing His enemies, He would draw upon Himself their infirmities and sorrows, "and bear their iniquities." All this he had pondered long and earnestly in the silence of the wilderness, unable to solve the contradictions or to discern whither they tended, till Jesus came to be baptized. Never before had he seen in any human face such power of love and innocence, such majesty and meekness, such capacity of sorrow; and beholding Him he began to realise that he was confronted by the very visage which Isaiah had endeavoured to suggest. It was a revelation to him that his own ministry was being justified by the event, for the kingdom of

heaven was indeed at hand, and was already individualised in its King.<sup>1</sup>

During forty days, in which Jesus in the desert was being prepared for His manifestation, the Baptist was also undergoing a process of opening of his understanding. While Jesus was being tempted in solitude to believe that He could not be the Messiah, the Baptist, with susceptible crowds around him, was being tempted to assume that he was the Messiah. The result and reward of his conquest of that temptation was deeper self-abnegation, involving clearer spiritual insight. So when he beheld Jesus coming from His great victory, bearing in His emaciated yet glorified figure the traces of His awful conflict—His countenance especially transfigured by resignation and readiness to undertake a ministry which would lead him to His cross—all at once the mystery was solved. There, innocent as a lamb about to be immolated, was verily the suffering servant of Jehovah, who, for love's sake, was taking upon Him not the deliverance of the nation but the iniquities of all men. "Lo, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

We need not of course infer that when the Baptist uttered this prophecy, he had the matured consciousness of the great truth which two of his hearers, St. Peter and St. John, afterwards came to find embodied in it. His thoughts of the Messiah were far higher

<sup>1</sup> Koim, *Jesus of Nazareth*, vol. ii. p. 217; Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. i. p. 263.

than those of all His contemporaries, but His own prophetic words soared far beyond his thoughts, and their real significance could only be understood after events had fulfilled them. Indeed, their full significance is as inexhausted and as inexhaustible to-day as when they were first spoken. The fact remains, however, that in one pathetic sentence, the Baptist—a Jew addressing Jews—in a striking metaphor, “condensing the whole sacrificial system of the Law into a burning word,” directly applied it to Jesus.<sup>1</sup> He did not refer to any particular sacrifice, and he may not have had any distinctive rite in view,<sup>2</sup> but his thought was full of atonement. There was God’s sacrifice who was taking away not “sins”—the particular transgressions, of which by this law Jews were tempted to think exclusively—but “sin” in its totality—not the sin of the covenant people—but the sin of the whole “world.” In the very forefront of the Gospel, therefore, in this most pregnant sentence we have summed up the whole testimony of the New Testament concerning Christ and His mission. He had come as the Lamb of God, not for the removal from the world of the penalty due to sin, but for the “covering” or extermination of sin—

<sup>1</sup> Reynolds, *John Baptist*, 1875, p. 361.

<sup>2</sup> The Passover was at hand, and it seems impossible to exclude the thought of the paschal lamb with which the Lord was afterward identified (Wescott, on *St. John’s Gospel*, p. 20). The paschal sacrifice was the basis of

all the sacrifices of Israel, and was only enlarged and applied in the morning and evening sacrifices in which the twofold ideas of redemption and communion were exhibited. (Edersheim, *Life and Times*, vol. i. p. 342.) Lightfoot, *Horæ Heb. et Talm.*, Works Pitman, vol. xi. pp. 325-27.

the taking for ever away of the evil principle which separates all men from God.

If the Baptist had come in the spirit of Isaiah, it was soon manifest that Jesus had come in the power of the suffering servant of Jehovah, of whom Isaiah had prophesied. He had not come "in His own name," moved by personal impulses to do His own will, but in the name of His Father, in absolute self surrender to do only His will. He was a mediator, not because He had stepped between an alienated race and God ; not because He had been elected by the race as Moses was put forward by Israel to plead their cause ; but as one whom God had consecrated and sent<sup>1</sup> into the world, not to obtain, but to reveal His eternal good-will for their salvation.<sup>2</sup> It was a complete reversal of the ideas which till then had prevailed of the relation in which God stands to man. Good men till then, even when rendering sacrifice and service as Jehovah's due, had lived very much unto themselves. They had obeyed and honoured Him, in the hope that it would be well with them in this world and also in the next. Now, however, One was among them who said that He was entrusted with all the authority of His father, not to demand their service, but to claim the Divine prerogative of serving them, not expecting any offering from them, but insisting upon His sole right of being their sacrifice. Giving Himself for them as His Father was always supplying their necessities, He was among them as One

<sup>1</sup> John x. 31.

<sup>2</sup> Bushnell, *The Vicarious Sacrifice*, p. 32.

who had come, "not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."<sup>1</sup>

This expression is the keynote of all the Lord's utterances, and of all the testimonies of His Apostles concerning His life and work. He had not been sent into the world just to influence men for their good, by teaching them purer doctrine, by setting them a holier example, and by accepting with greater meekness and submission their common liabilities, and the consequences of general human misdirection and original sin. In assuming humanity He had, indeed, involved Himself

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xx, 28 ; Mark x. 45.

The use of the word "ransom" in the Greek Testament is based upon its use in the Septuagint, where the verb is employed at least forty times as the equivalent of Hebrew verbs signifying to recover what has been alienated, and generally to deliver from the power of enemies (Psalm cvi. 10), from the power of sin (Psalm cxxx. 7), from the power of death (Hosea xiii. 14). The reference in every case is to the Exodus when first the word came into use. The word, therefore, has always a Hebrew significance, separating it entirely from the Gentile usage of it. For the Gentile idea of ransom is that of price or forfeit, or equivalent, paid to the power from whom the person is delivered. And this was the idea which inspired one of the early theories of atonement, that Christ's sacrifice was ransom paid to the devil. Neither the

Old nor the New Testament usage of the word yields the slightest authority for this application. Jehovah did redeem His people at great cost, but He paid Pharaoh no ransom. Of the greater work of redeeming the race Hosea says, "I will redeem them from death, O death ! I will be thy plagues ; O grave ! I will be thy destruction." So redemption instead of involving a price paid to the powers of evil, involved an unknowable devastation of those powers at the cost of unknowable sacrifice to the Deliverer. This was the sense in which Christ applied the word to Himself, and though men could not understand all that was implied in it, they would understand generally that the forfeited lives of many would be spared and restored, because His had been surrendered and given away. Cp. Dale, *The Atonement*, p. 76.

in all these penalties of sin ; but His mission was one of peculiar service, a service of unique and unapproachable sacrifice, that through the power of it He might bring men out of their sins, and so out of their penalties, into oneness in Himself with God. Upon several occasions, under the power of this conviction He deliberately applied to Himself the symbolism of the sacrifices, but always widening the application beyond the utmost limit which a Jew could have conceived. For example, in the Synagogue at Capernaum, a most sordid and unteachable crowd, who had intruded upon Him in the hope of forcing Him into their political schemes, and of using His miraculous power for their personal convenience, demanded from Him a repetition of the Mosaic wonder, a supply of manna, bread from Heaven. In reply, He offered Himself as "the Bread of God which cometh down from Heaven," and altogether uninfluenced by their ever-deepening contradiction and hardening unbelief, He proceeded to enlarge His saying in words which we may be sure were not meant to mystify them, but were used because no others could fitly suggest His meaning. "I am the living bread which came down from Heaven : if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever : and the bread that I will give, is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."<sup>1</sup> To their unbelief it proved a hard saying, and it was the occasion of His rejection by many of them ; to His own disciples it was a deep saying to be pondered reverently until He, or the Holy

<sup>1</sup> John vi. 51.

Spirit, in the events of His ministry would reveal its significance. To us it may still be a difficult saying, though probably our difficulty arises from confounding the idea which His hearers entertained of manna as bread of God, with the sacrificial metaphor which He applied to Himself. Under the law, as we have seen, the portion of the sacrifices which was consumed upon the altar was designated "the Bread of God." Instead of signifying the gifts which God bestowed upon man, the expression covered those parts of a sacrifice of which not even a priest was permitted to eat, because Jehovah claimed them as exclusively His own,<sup>2</sup> after the blood of the victim had been brought into contact with the altar, His symbol. Our Lord knew well the import of this action in the sacrificial ritual, and yet He did not hesitate upon this occasion to apply it to Himself. He clearly identified Himself with Jehovah's peculiar portion of a sacrifice, and He instructed the people that His heavenly Father thus offered Him for the satisfaction of their hunger and thirst unto life eternal. Before He could be given to them for this end, He must be given up *for* them; but through this surrender there would be provided heavenly food, enough and to spare for all who cared to receive it, and "he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever."

Then again, not that He might expound but because He must testify—not as explaining a theology but as revealing the truth, not preaching a gospel but acting and speaking that "there might be a gospel to preach"—at

<sup>1</sup> Lev. iii. 11; Ezek. xlv. 7; Sykes, *Essay on Sacrifice*, p. 77.

His last passover,<sup>1</sup> of which with great desire He longed to partake, He identified Himself with all that the paschal sacrifice had predicted in the past, and provided for the commemoration of its fulfilment in Himself, for all the future. In instituting the sacrament of baptism, He omitted what was painful in the corresponding Hebrew rite, and assumed as the action and element essential to His purpose "the washing with water." From the Paschal feast He transferred not the lamb—for no longer were the creatures to suffer in the worship of the Creator—but only the bread and the wine as all that He required. He was inaugurating "the new covenant" of which Jeremiah had prophesied.<sup>2</sup> He had proclaimed the only law to be observed in it, the new commandment,<sup>3</sup> that His disciples should "love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." The seal of His love to them was the offering of Himself to fulfil His Father's will for them, and of that offering the new ordinance would be more than a memorial. It would be a medium of communion with Himself as the spring of their life. The efficacy of His sacrifice for them depended upon their being incorporated in Him; and therefore, although He took into His hands the paschal bread and wine and blessed them, it was not of them but of His body and blood

<sup>1</sup> It appears to have been the first at which He ever presided as Head of a company, and if so, the offering of the Paschal Lamb on this occasion was the first and last, and only sacrifice He ever

presented. See Edersheim, *Life and Times*, vol. ii. pp. 490 seq.; Lightfoot, *The Temple Service*, Works, vol. ix. pp. 120-170.

<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah xxxi. 31-34.

<sup>3</sup> John xiii. 34.

which He invited them to partake. "Lo! my body being broken for you; take, eat," "Lo! the cup of the new covenant in my blood, drink ye all of it." He had manifestly the same truth in His mind which He sought to set forth when He said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you."

And surely we have sufficient acquaintance with the sacrificial ritual which supplied the words, to apprehend the great spiritual verity which, under the veil of earthly things, He symbolised and sealed to us. It was life liberated by sacrifice that atoned under the Law; and though the symbol was necessarily imperfect, seeing there was no real union between the offerer and his sacrifice, as a predictive type it sufficed. For all that it lacked was supplied in the voluntary sacrifice of Christ. With Him who was not ashamed to call us brethren, who because "the children are partakers of flesh and blood, Himself likewise took part of the same, that through death He might destroy Him that had the power of death," all men are capable of vital union. In Scripture death is never represented as natural but as the consequence of sin; and as incarnate in human nature, our Lord assumed conditions under which as Son of Man, perfectly obedient to God's will, He could die. In dying He undoubtedly endured the penalty of the Fall, and thus far fulfilled our destiny; but in dying He also made the efficacy of His life accessible to the race whose nature He assumed. In virtue of this dying, His life continues operating in the liberated fulness of its energy for our advantage. It is this life which He

desires and pledges Himself in the holy sacrament to communicate to us. The sacrifice which rendered that life available, when once offered on the morrow, could not and need not ever after be repeated; but those for whom that sacrifice was so freely made, were involved thereby in the obligation and privilege of offering continually "the sacrifice of praise."<sup>1</sup> As they yielded themselves in living sacrifice and thank-offering for their redemption, they would become by faith partakers of His body and blood. Through their faith, would be communicated to them His life or spirit of self-sacrifice, and when that spirit is perfect and complete in His Church, He will celebrate in His Father's kingdom the closest of all communion.<sup>2</sup>

While thus identifying Himself with the most prominent sacrificial institutions of the Law, our Lord's own ideas of sacrifice rose far higher and extended far beyond the thoughts suggested by these rites. They

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews xiii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> The doctrine of transubstantiation like many other corruptions in Christianity is based upon heathen ideas. That the bread and wine through the prayer of the priest are changed into the substance of Christ's flesh and blood, is a belief worthy of savages; and yet, as in nearly every perverted dogma, there is a truth in transubstantiation which is of very precious import. The transubstantiation occurs not in the elements of bread and wine, but in the worthy partakers, who

through faith by the operation of the Holy Spirit are regenerated into Christ. So considered, there is nothing fanciful or exaggerated in the language which our Lord employed, if we try to grasp the reality which only it can suggest. For the life, the death, the totality of Christ, as God's unspeakable gift, must be the sustenance and life of the Church on earth and in heaven alike. (Westcott, *St. John's Epistle*, pp. 84-87; Hobrove, pp. 293-4; Stanley, *Christian Institutions*, pp. 97, 107.)

had all more or less a judicial significance, as means legally provided to secure a specified end; but His revelation was not of sacrifice as a legally appointed means, but as the very highest of ends. He disclosed it as a law in the nature of things, and essential to the highest quality of life. Sacrifice is a principle operative in every domain of existence. In nature, the lower form of life is always being sacrificed for the higher, the vegetable for the animal, the animal for the sustenance of man.<sup>1</sup> Some of the recent discoveries of science are pathetic illustrations of the fact that in the world of nature as truly as in the world of man, no creature, no organism liveth unto itself, for the law of sacrifice comprehends in its sweep the very lowest manifestations of being.<sup>2</sup> In Christ, however, the law of sacrifice was revealed as comprehending the very highest manifestation of being. He magnified and made it honourable as the law of the Divine life, but as operating in complete reversal of the natural order. In nature the lower is created to serve the higher, and the weak gives itself up to the strong; but in the spiritual order, the higher lives for the lower, the strong bears the burdens of the weak, the good endure for the evil, and God takes the sinner's place. Our Lord brought the Father, whom no one had seen at any time, into view, by doing His works, and

<sup>1</sup> "La fleur tombe en livrant ses parfums au Zéphyr" (Lamartine, *L'Automne*), and wild myrtles preserve

"Their hoard of perfume for the dying hour,  
When rudeness crushes them." (Talfourd, *Ion*.)

<sup>2</sup> Taylor, *Altruism in Plants*.

by fulfilling His intentions from the very same motive. What He said and did, what He was and what He suffered, was just a revelation in time of that love which in God is eternally watching over a sinful race to seek and to save them. He was His father's mediator upon whom before He came into the world, the whole burden of human suffering and human sin had rested. So He came not to *make a sacrifice* by which the difficulty between God and man could be arranged, but to *reveal God's sacrifice*, that through the revelation He might redeem, regenerate, and reconcile humanity to God. The joy that was set before Him was the same which satisfied the servant of the Lord in His unparalleled suffering, the joy of seeing His travail of soul issue in the communication to a perishing race of the life which He had in Himself. Willingly and for this end He incorporated Himself in humanity, and as willingly through death He would sink as a seed into its destiny, that as the head of a new creation He might bring forth fruit multitudinous to the glory of His Father.<sup>1</sup>

This conviction that the losing of life would in His case be the gain of eternal life to innumerable myriads, accounts for conduct leading directly to His crucifixion, which would be otherwise inexplicable. The fact stands clearly out from the Gospel narratives that the arrest of Jesus was due to His own voluntary surrender. He was captured, not because His enemies had succeeded in their plans against Him, but because He chose to fall into their hands. The evangelists carefully

<sup>1</sup> John xii. 24, 25.

represent the closing transactions of His life in their relation to the Divine order. A certain course was deliberately followed by Him, because He believed it to be ordained in the counsels of God. "Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am He. And Judas also which betrayed Him, stood with them. As soon then as He had said unto them, I am He, they went backward, and fell to the ground."<sup>1</sup> The sense of humiliation and awe, which the sudden revelation of a higher and holier nature inspires in coarse and sinful natures, so overwhelmed them, that they could only fulfil their mission with His full consent. So when St. Peter ventured upon his act of rash resistance, He convinced him that He required neither his protection nor his succour. He was no helpless prisoner held firmly in the grip of His enemies, for He could secure His liberty by a single prayer, yea, by a silent wish. So turning to His trembling and really vanquished assailants, He allowed them to lead Him away to judgment, and torture, and death, "for the cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?"<sup>2</sup>

And yet that was "the cup" which just before He had prayed might if possible be taken away. He had learned that it was not possible; that the cup instead of being taken away by His Father's power, was really given Him by His father's love. It was essential to the fulfilment of His mission, and therefore He had thankfully accepted it as "a cup of salvation, calling

<sup>1</sup> John xviii. 4-6.

<sup>2</sup> John xviii. 11.

upon the name of the Lord." We have thus self-surrender so complete as to be absolute; not human surrender to a fate that is found to be inevitable, as when a martyr caught in the toils of his enemies succumbs to their power, but Divine surrender to a suffering which was evitable. The martyr in falling a sacrifice to the truth loses his life, but Christ's life was not lost, it was given. Death to the martyr is no part of the original idea of his mission, but something which supervenes and interrupts it; in our Lord's case death from the very first entered into the plan of His ministry, and without a painful and shameful death His ministry could not have been fulfilled. He came into the world to be crucified. "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life. . . . No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself: I have power to lay it down.<sup>1</sup> . . . This commandment have I received of My Father." He died not from external compulsion, for He was perfectly free to evade the necessity, but from inward spontaneity, as held only by the cords of love to higher duty. Death did not vanquish Him as he vanquishes all other human beings. Most unrelenting of despots, he comes upon all other persons by surprise, and forcibly carries them whither no one of them would naturally go. But even upon the cross Christ did not yield Himself up to death. He confronted death, as He confronted His captors in Gethsemane, and assured that He had finished His work, He looked beyond death, and, in a most kingly

<sup>1</sup> John x. 17-18.

way, surrendered His spirit, not to death but into the hands of His father.<sup>1</sup>

The ministry of Christ, heralded by the distinct prediction that it was redemptive in its intention and sacrificial in its method, was thus begun, continued, and ended by Him in the full conviction that He was giving His life a ransom for many. Though not offered upon any altar, nor slain as a sacrifice according to the ceremonial of the law, but simply murdered in flagrant violation of the law, His soul was made an offering for sin for the salvation of the world.<sup>2</sup> As the lamb of Jehovah, upon Him was laid the iniquity of us all, that He might bear away the sin of the world. When we turn to the Apostolic testimonies recorded in the New Testament we find that every one of them either directly expresses or is based upon and implies the same conviction. The faith of the apostles in the

<sup>1</sup> Christ's death is uniformly represented in the New Testament as a *voluntary act*; in exact fulfilment of what He Himself said of it in John x. 17, 18, Matthew xxvi. 50, Mark xv. 37, John xix. 30, state that "He gave" or "yielded up His Spirit," Luke xxiii. 46 gives the words in which He did so, quoted from Psalm xxxi. 5. In close relation to this are St. Paul's statements in Ephes. v. 2 and 25. Gal. ii. 20, and that of St. Peter in his first epistle ii. 23. All the evangelists note the "loud voice," or cry uttered before the sufferer ex-

pired, an indication that he retained the full vigour of the vital organs to the moment of death. This was one of the marvels of the crucifixion which deeply impressed the Roman centurion, who must have seen many crucifixions but had never seen or heard of one in which the crucified died within three hours, and uttering a shriek which proved he was strong to the very last. The Patristic writers all accept the death of Christ as spontaneous, compare Tertull., *Apol.*, chap. xxi.; Augustine on *St. John's Gospel*, xix. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Bushnell, *God in Christ*, p. 213.

Divine sacrifice was not derived by them from interpretation of Old Testament Scriptures; it rested upon the revelation given through Christ Himself, a revelation for which they were as unprepared as they were for the revelation of His resurrection. Once that it began to dawn upon them, the facts of Christ's life and His own teaching illuminated Scripture, and with understandings opened they learned that "thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name, "among all nations."<sup>1</sup> The epistles of St. James and St. Jude are not dogmatic, but didactic and ethical in their character and purpose, and in writing them neither apostle felt under any necessity to defend or to expound the doctrines of the new religion. And yet, the silence of St. James—most Jewish of Christians—to the ordinances of the Law and to the services of the Temple, surely signifies that he felt he was living in a dispensation when all such ordinances and services had been rendered unnecessary. Then the sublime doxology with which St. Jude concludes his epistle, plainly indicates that the foundation of all his hope was the Divine mediation of "our Lord Jesus Christ." "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless (without blemish) before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, now and ever. Amen."

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxiv. 46, 47.

The epistles of St. Peter are full of references to the sacrificial worship of his forefathers, and these are all used in illustration of his teaching concerning Christ. By His precious blood, "as of a lamb without blemish and without spot," we have been redeemed,<sup>1</sup> "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by Whose stripes ye were healed;"<sup>2</sup> Who "once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."<sup>3</sup> To abstract from the epistles of St. Paul the same or similar conceptions would be to destroy them, while to cite an illustration we should have to quote almost the whole of his writings. Redemption from sin and from the power of the devil, propitiation set forth by God, reconciliation with God, are all connected in the most explicit manner with the facts of Christ's death and resurrection. Christ is the High Priest through whom he gives thanks to God and by whom we have access to the Divine Presence.<sup>4</sup> He is the sacrifice whose atoning blood justifies and brings us near.<sup>5</sup> He is the passover sacrificed for us, that life, freed and purified from all leaven of wickedness, might be, alike in its pains and pleasures, a perpetual festival;<sup>6</sup> and He is the Mediator between God and men who gave Himself a ransom for all,<sup>7</sup> that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.<sup>8</sup> As we have

<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter i. 19.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Peter ii. 24.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Peter iii. 18.

<sup>4</sup> Ephes. ii. 18, and iii. 12.

<sup>5</sup> Colos. ii. 13.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinth. v. 7-8.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Timothy ii. 5, 6.

<sup>8</sup> Titus ii. 14.

already seen, the unknown writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews has developed the same doctrines in language of unmistakable clearness. His great object was to show that the sublime ideals which were only projected in the dispensation introduced through Moses were all being fulfilled in the dispensation revealed by Christ. The theocracy, which Moses the faithful servant of Jehovah had failed to found, had been successfully established by Christ the Son, in the kingdom of God. The house of Israel, which Jehovah's indwelling had failed to sanctify, was now realised in the true house of God, the Church; and the offices which in old time were divided between Moses the apostle and Aaron the high priest, were united in an infinitely loftier form in Christ, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession. We need not follow out his comparisons whereby he instructed his countrymen, that the sacrificial worship and priestly mediation, upon which their fathers rested with all their hearts, were only temporary shadows of better and enduring realities secured to them by the death, resurrection, ascension, and mediation of Christ in the presence of the Holiest. We only observe that the truth of Christ's vicarious sacrifice threads this epistle, as it does all others we have mentioned, through and through, "as a leaf is threaded by its fibres." The teaching in each and all of them is simply an expansion of the doctrine proclaimed in the first Christian sermon that was ever preached, that through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, "delivered by the determinate counsel

and foreknowledge of God," there had been secured for all who would repent, "remission of sins" and "the gift of the Holy Ghost."<sup>1</sup>

St. John, the last writer in the New Testament, has summarised and focussed the revelation given through all the Scriptures, in the testimony that God in love sent His Son to be the atonement for our sins, the propitiation not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.<sup>2</sup> The word *ἱλασμός* which he employs is peculiar to him. Found in the Septuagint as the synonym of *kippurim*, it has numerous Latin equivalents. Augustine has sometimes rendered it "propitiator," but the rendering of it as "propitiation" has prevailed. St. John has carefully emphasised the thought that Christ is both offering and priest. A propitiator might employ means of propitiation outside of himself, but Christ is our "propitiation," just as He is our "righteousness" and our "life." It must be noted also that the idea expressed in St. John's usage of the word is quite contrasted with classical usage. The *ἱλασμοί* in Greek tragedy, as we have seen, were offered to the deities of the under world with the view of appeasing their anger; the *καθαρμοί* were effective for restoring the penitent to society through the favour of Apollo and the deities of the celestial world. St. John's conception is not that of appeasing one who is angry with a personal feeling against an offender; it is that of covering or exterminating what has occasioned a necessary alienation, and interposed an inevitable obstacle to fellowship. Such

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 22, 38.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John ii. 2 and iv. 9-10.

phrases as propitiating God, "reconciling" God, are foreign to the language alike of St. John and of all the writers of the New Testament. Propitiation always means the atoning, covering, removal of some check on man's side, which, coming between the soul and God, intercepts the light of His favour.<sup>1</sup> It signifies a Divine act which affects wholly the matter of the sin and the sinner, as something which neutralises sin, and quickens and changes, yea creates anew the character of the sinner. So in St. John's thought *ἱλασμός* includes *καθαρός*.<sup>2</sup> The blood of propitiation reconciles the sinner to God by cleansing away his sin, not by external application as in the case of the leper, but by spiritual appropriation of Christ's life, made available by His death, resurrection, and ascension. So the "blood of Christ," by which the atonement is made, is the very power by which we are regenerated and sanctified. The voices vary, but the Apostolic testimony is always the same. St. Peter, St. Paul, St. John, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in whatever light they may set forth the cross, find but the one significance in "the blood of Christ" shed upon it. The phrase was figurative and symbolic in the usage of each of them—as indeed all human speech throughout must be—and doubtless they felt, as we are often forced to feel, that no human words, however perfect and refined, can do justice to spiritual facts, which are both too lofty and too profound to be expressed by them. Yet they never allow us to form, from their use of the

<sup>1</sup> Romans v. 10, 11; 2 Corinth. v. 18.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John i. 7.

expression, any material conception. The power of Christ's blood to atone and cleanse is the virtue of the life or spirit expressed in it—the "Eternal Spirit,"<sup>1</sup> the spirit of self-sacrifice in which God is eternally rich—and when that spirit dwells in and controls us perfectly we shall have everlasting fellowship with the Father and with the Son, in the unity of the Holy Ghost.<sup>2</sup>

It is interesting if not significant to find the "Lamb of God," proclaimed by the Baptist, occupying so prominent a place in the testimony of St. John the Divine. His conception of the truth implied in the phrase had greatly enlarged since the day when he first heard it applied to Jesus of Nazareth. More powerfully impressed even then, than were his fellow disciples, both by the words of the Baptist and by the personality of Jesus, he seems during three years of close and devoted discipleship to have more truly discerned than they did his Lord's real mission. It was he who treasured up the mysterious discourses about the "Bread of God," "the flesh and the blood which Christ would give for the life of the world." So when he gazed upon his Lord as He was dying upon the cross, he may have begun to apprehend that there was more than human passion displayed in that tragedy, and that the wrath of man was being overruled to further some "determinate counsel of God." After Pentecost he disappears from the scenes depicted in the Acts, and for years during which his companions,

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews ix. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Westcott, *Com. on Epistle of St. John*, pp. 84-85.

in labours most abundant, were sowing the seed of the Gospel in the great field of the Gentile world, he, in what may have been regarded as a life of inaction, was pondering the mystery of the Life which had been manifested, and was "tarrying," as the Lord predicted, for another coming of Himself. St. Paul and the rest of the apostles were powerfully instructing the Church as to the relation of the sacrifice of Christ the Son of God to the salvation of the world from sin; but at last came the time when St. John was required; and when he broke his long silence it was to complete the revelation. His companion apostles had laid the foundations of the faith in the truth, intimated before by prophecy and type, that the only sacrifice that could atone sin must be set forth and consummated by God Himself. The inference, however, was natural that the Divine sacrifice was only inaugurated by the manifestation of Christ in the flesh, and was completed in His crucifixion on Calvary. St. Peter had furnished a very precious clue to the apprehension of the mystery in representing Christ as the unblemished and spotless Lamb, "who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you."<sup>1</sup> In the Apocalypse, "the Lamb as it had been slain," disclosed in "the midst of the throne," as adored by the elders and four mystic creatures for having "redeemed them with His blood,"<sup>2</sup> is revealed as "slain from the foundation of the world."<sup>3</sup> The Divine sacrifice was thus exhibited not as a historical fact, an action begun and ended in

<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter i. 19-20.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. v. 6-10.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. xiii. 8.

time, which had been devised as an after-expedient to amend what of God's original work an enemy had marred. It was set forth as something original, something essential in the being of God. Christ as one with God, who always has upon Him the burden of His universe, was bearing sin in vicarious sacrifice, before He was manifested as bearing it away. He did not become the Lamb of God when He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; for before He was manifested He reigned, and must reign eternally, as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. It is another endeavour through metaphor to suggest a spiritual truth which human speech is too rude and imperfect an instrument to utter; but guided by its light, as we contemplate the appalling fact of the Divine human heart broken upon Calvary because of sin, we begin to discover how the Being of God is eternally related to anything and everything in His universe that needs to be atoned. We understand, too, how the Apostle who wrote the Apocalypse is properly designated as St. John *ὁ θεολόγος*. For alike in that work, and in his gospel and epistles, he alone—or rather, he first of all theologians—has taught us, that if we would truly apprehend the mystery of the atonement we must proceed towards it not from our conscious alienation and degradation, but from the essential holiness and love of God.<sup>1</sup>

It is thus plain that before the dogma of Christ's sacrificial mission can be rejected, the whole tenor of

<sup>1</sup> Compare Maurice, *Sacrifice*, p. 190.

the New Testament language must be remodelled.<sup>1</sup> We must, however, remember that all through the New Testament it is presented as the revelation of a mystery hidden from the ages, and therefore as something which must continue to exercise our understandings and try our faith. Even when we are able to form our clearest and most exact conceptions concerning it, we may be sure that we have not solved all the difficulties which have been or which yet may be raised about it. Not seldom have theologians supposed they were expounding or explaining the mystery, when they were actually undermining its truth. Attempting in perfect seriousness and with pure intent to solve the difficulties, they were unconsciously working for the subversion of the faith. It would not be difficult to detect in some theories of the atonement, long considered orthodox by very large sections of the Church, the taint of heathen conceptions. The ancient theory of the Eastern Church, by which for nearly a thousand years many of the profoundest theologians of their day were content to explain the atonement, was based upon the idea of a ransom paid to Satan to redeem the human race from his thrall. And yet if that fundamental idea was not wholly borrowed from the Typhonic mythology of Egypt its development was greatly influenced by it.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Magee, *Dissertations*, xxvii. ; Warburton, *Div. Leg.*, book ix. chap. ii.

<sup>2</sup> Osiris, the supreme god of all Egypt, was slain by Typhon, the Egyptian Ahriman, or rather the

Satan into which Ahriman latterly degenerated. After the fragments of his body, which had been scattered by his slayer, were collected and buried by his wife, the sorrowful Isis, he returned to

Another great theory, for which that of ransom was discarded by the Western or Latin Church—which held the field for five centuries preceding the Reformation, and which still colours some systems of Reformed theology—was based upon notions derived from old Roman jurisprudence. In this theory—as clearly formulated by the master-mind of Anselm in a treatise<sup>1</sup> with which theologians have yet to reckon—all is made to turn upon the Roman law of debt,<sup>2</sup> upon penalties exacted for breach of obligation established by contract, and upon the Roman notion of the continuance of individual existence by universal succession. The atonement is represented by it as an act of homage and satisfaction due to the greatness and majesty of God. Both theories, and many others which sprung from them, fell wide of the mark, because their framers failed to apprehend the significance of the symbols employed in Scripture to suggest the truth. And not a few of the modern Protestant theories—such as those which represent the atonement as having a relation neither to Satan, nor to God's personal claims, but to the moral order of the universe—will be found to fail, because their framers ignore or reject the symbolic teaching of Scripture with regard to an objective atonement.<sup>3</sup> The history of theology seems to indicate in regard to this and other cardinal doctrines of Scripture, that many and even

life to be the judge of all who have died, and to see Typhon vanquished by Horus, his son.

*Christ in Modern Theology*, pp. 122 seq., 479 seq.

<sup>1</sup> *Cur Deus Homo?*

<sup>3</sup> Compare Dale, *The Atonement*, pp. 297-9.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. A. M. Fairbairn, D.D.,

conflicting theories may be required to suggest the whole reality of the truth, so as to suit the varying necessities of the life of the Church at different periods of its history. What we all have to do, is to endeavour carefully to keep the fact of the sacrifice of Christ separate and distinct from the theories devised to explain it. It is faith in the fact, and not faith in any of the theories, that saves and sanctifies the human soul. There may be much in the fact which we cannot explain, and which the acutest intellects are not here expected to explain; but its revelation can be adoringly received by the sagest and by the simplest alike. Just as the sun has outlived many well-devised and cleverly elaborated theories of light and heat, so the fundamental truth—"Christ died for us"—which underlies our religion, has already survived several theologies and will probably survive our latest, as a verity the infinitude of which the greatest intellect may not measure, but on which we can confidently rest all our hope, and by which we are really nourished into purer knowledge and nobler human growth.<sup>1</sup>

I will not attempt to describe or to review the various schools of theology whose founders and disciples have endeavoured to expound this essential article of our creed. The task would be too great for the limits of this lecture, and moreover, it has already often been executed with commendable fairness and with marked

<sup>1</sup> The preposition "for" us is represented by four words in the original, each with its own shade

of meaning. *ἀντί*, Matt. xx. 28; *ὑπέρ*, Luke xxii. 19; *πρὸς*, Rom. viii. 3; *διὰ*, Rom. iv. 25.

ability by many theologians of our own generation. Among the works to which I have been specially indebted I may name Professor Ritschl's *History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation*;<sup>1</sup> Professor Hodges' *Systematic Theology*, vol. ii.;<sup>2</sup> Professor Crawford's *Scripture Doctrine of the Atonement*;<sup>3</sup> Dr. Dale's *Congregational Lecture on the Atonement*; and Dr. Cave's *Scripture Doctrine of Sacrifice*.<sup>4</sup> From the study of these and similar works we discover that some of the theories apparently most antagonistic to each other, do not really conflict when properly examined. It has often happened that one theory has been superseded, not because it has been proved to be radically false, but because found insufficient to account for all the facts to be covered. In the history of doctrines we do not contemplate a battlefield strewn with the wreck of contending systems. We are witnesses rather of a process in which systems have been successively outgrown or left behind by an advancing and maturing intelligence. And yet no system that ever gained for itself a general acceptance can be said to have been wholly left behind. Its essential truth has survived in the system which supplanted it. The intelligence which it served to foster, having acquired ability thoroughly to "understand and appreciate it,

<sup>1</sup> Edin., Edmonston and Douglas, 1872. <sup>2</sup> Edin., Nelson and Sons, 1874. <sup>3</sup> Edin., Blackwood and Sons, 1874. <sup>4</sup> T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh. The works of Dr. Bushnell, of Dr. Macleod

Campbell, of Mr. Erskine of Linlathen, and of others, have proved to me very suggestive. They are very valuable treatises upon the great theme, and most worthy of earnest consideration.

has *ipso facto* grown out of and beyond it. It has extracted the principle from the former embodiment, and made it capable of entering into combination with other principles to produce new forms of life and thought."<sup>1</sup> So, remembering with thankfulness that the human mind has not yet reached the limits of its power of comprehension, that the full significance of the sacrifice of Christ is as far as ever from exhausted, and that the revelation of the Spirit sent "to guide us into all truth"<sup>2</sup> is still proceeding; I will not canvass particular theories, but rather venture to sketch the more salient points of the doctrine as presented in Scripture, in the light of the experience gained by the Church during the many centuries in which it has been divinely instructed in the "great mystery of godliness."

*First—As to the necessity for the sacrifice of Christ,* the teaching of Scripture is unmistakable in precision and clearness. Its uniform testimony is to the effect, that the necessity for the Divine sacrifice originated in the estrangement of the creature. According to St. Paul, humanity is alienated from God because of *sin*. This is the invariable burden of all his epistles, and indeed of all Scripture in the Old and New Testaments. According to St. John, sin is "lawlessness," the self-assertion of the creature wilfully violating the limits within which the original idea of

<sup>1</sup> Professor Edward Caird, "Essay on the Theology and Ethics of Dante," in vol. i. of

*Essays on Literature and Philosophy.*

<sup>2</sup> John xvi. 13.

his being can be harmoniously realised. So what St. Paul characterises as *enmity* to God, and what St. John characterises as *hatred* of God—who is essentially *love*—is in every one of us by natural inheritance, and to it all the disorder and sorrow and suffering in the world are due. This dogma concerning our present condition is so very offensive that it is no wonder it has all along been rejected and flouted, especially by the avowed worshippers of humanity. According to them man neither is the enemy of God, nor is alienated from God because of his wickedness. In his nature there is no disorder, save what is inseparable from his imperfect development. If there be suffering and weakness and misery in his life, they are traceable not to his perversity, but to his ignorance; and all that is required to redeem him from them is only education to correct what in him is defective or faulty. Meanwhile it is well that the units should suffer, so that the great world system in some distant future may work out its beneficent result.

Universal experience, however, and the actual condition of the world and of man, contradict the philosophers and support the Apostles. Man's present character and relations are abnormal, for they do not harmonise with the universal order and peace of creation. The thoughts which he everywhere and always conceives of the Author of his being, his prolonged endeavours under all systems of religion to defend or save himself from Deity, and his universally exhibited uneasiness under law, which he alone of all creatures finds a bondage, indicate that whether by inheritance or personal self-

assertion, or both, he is estranged in thought and affection, in the very spring of his being, from the holiness which in his own belief is essential to the Divine blessedness. This consciousness is not a superstitious feeling from which culture will set us free, for the higher we rise, the more the load upon the conscience increases; and the nobler become our conceptions of what God must be, the more humiliating is our confession of what we really are.

If man as a moral being feels condemned by the evil that is in himself and in the world, he yet finds in his self-condemnation and in his desire to remedy or annul the evils that afflict him the ground of his hope. The moral consciousness that condemns himself and the world, was originally implanted in him by the Creator of the world. It is the token and pledge therefore that though he is now evil by natural inheritance, he is not essentially evil, and that though in his present condition, experience of and conflict with evil "may be the only means possible to a higher good—as calling into activity the Divine element which would destroy it, and thereby contributing to its realisation in character"<sup>1</sup>—evil is not necessary to the fulfilment of the original idea of his being. On this point also the teaching of Scripture is explicit. Moral evil is not eternal, for if it were, Deity would be divided against Himself,<sup>2</sup> and there would be "two infinities." The Creator is in no way

<sup>1</sup> Compare Jones, *Browning as a Philosopher and a Religious Teacher*, p. 271 seq., also some most thoughtful and searching

observations in pp. 155, 156, 357, 359.

<sup>2</sup> Hitchcock, *Eternal Atonement*, p. 6.

responsible for it as His creation, for that would represent Him as willing into existence a contradiction of His own nature. According to Scripture, moral evil originated not in the plan of the Creator, but in the will of the creature, and therefore for our comfort we are encouraged by Scripture to hope that, as having had a beginning, it must also have an end. Scripture begins and concludes with the prophecy that its conquest is temporary, that its reign in creation is local, and that its duration will prove but an incident—though one terribly prolonged—in the history of the universe. In the Apocalypse the Lamb is described as gaining over it a certain and complete victory, for in “the new heavens and the new earth” His throne alone is found to be established, and there is an end of “death,” and an end of “hell.”<sup>1</sup> The Mazdean conception therefore of conflict between good and evil powers, and the Platonic conception of a Divine principle operating invisibly in humanity for its emancipation from evil, are assumed and corrected and fulfilled in the teaching of the Scripture. The mystery still remains that evil should have been divinely permitted to break out in the universe and invade the world of man, but the revelation of God’s relation to evil and of His purpose concerning it is clear enough.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Revelation xx. 14.

<sup>2</sup> “God’s all, man’s nought:  
But also, God, whose pleasure brought  
Man into being, stands away  
As it were, a handbreadth off, to give  
Room for the newly made to live,

For God cannot tolerate the disorder in the universe caused by rebellion; He wills to restore harmony and to reconcile all things unto Himself. Sin is a principle which, as the antagonism of good, a pure moral being must hate—hate more intensely and punish more inexorably the purer he is. What is essentially wrong would require to be made eternally right, before God could ignore or be reconciled to sin. So all through Scripture the Divine denunciations of sin are very stern, and the Divine judgments upon it are described as very severe. From the language employed concerning Divine vengeance we are not of course allowed to infer the existence in Deity of any angry mood or excitable disposition corresponding to our own troubled natures. The eternal repose of the all-perfect Being cannot be broken; but the language, though figurative, is appropriate as suggesting the inevitable and inexorable operation of retributive law as long as sin exists. It is true that the “action of Deity in relation to evil is

And look at Him from a place apart,  
And use His gifts of brain and heart,  
Given, indeed, but to keep for ever.  
Who speaks of man, then, must not sever  
Man's very elements from man,  
Saying, 'But all is God's'—whose plan  
Was to create man and then leave him  
Able, His own word saith, to grieve Him,  
But able to glorify Him too,  
As a mere machine could never do,  
That prayed or praised, all unaware  
Of its true fitness for aught but praise or prayer.  
Made perfect as a thing of course.”

(Browning, *Christmas Eve and Easter Day*, Works, ed. 1866, vol. iii. pp. 173-4).

never vindictive," and yet it is always "vindicatory." There must be unchangeable enmity between holiness and wickedness; and in the same enmity between evil and man made in the image after the likeness of God, lies all man's hope of good.

Here again this language concerning the vengeance of God as divinely intolerant of sin is employed, even though it is anthropomorphic and tends to belittle and degrade the sublime reality with which it deals. It is indeed merely the language of men, but it is the only language by which the consciences of men can be roused to appreciate the significance of sin. There is a general temptation besetting our nature to think lightly of sin, as not an offence against infinite holiness but only as a fault or mistake. There are also particular moods in which because the moral consciousness is weak, the sceptical intellect tempts us to regard it as affecting after all only ourselves, or at the most society. Therefore if we quietly accept the injury which by our folly we have brought upon ourselves, and succeed in making amends to society for having wronged or affronted it, we may think that there is an end of our transgression. The constitution of human nature, however, which, though we may ignore it, can neither be changed nor destroyed, will not allow us to indulge these pleasing delusions for long. Soon, very soon, our moral consciousness rises in might sufficient to rend such shallow sophistries, and to recall us to our real selves. Then we find that though we have endured the consequences of our imprudence, and though we have received the generous pardon of

our fellow-men, we cannot forgive ourselves. The thought of the Power higher than society, who put the moral consciousness within us at the first, and the conviction that we have offended Him by our transgression, begin to assert themselves; and as long as we are dominated by them—that is really as long as we live in this or in any other world—forgiveness of ourselves and by ourselves is simply and absolutely impossible.

Once put thus in possession of ourselves—our sin set before our eyes as evil which we have created but cannot destroy, and which we must account for to One infinitely holy, who cannot ignore it or change His relation to it—we discover that forgiveness is not the easy matter it seemed to be in the moment when the moral consciousness was feeble and the senses were active and strong. The very first difficulty that vexes us is as to the possibility of forgiveness, and were we left to ourselves to find the solution of that difficulty we should be overwhelmed in despair. Nature outside of us reveals no forgiveness, for its laws crush alike the penitent who bemoans, and the impenitent who mocks at sin. Our own nature is as inexorable in its verdict, for the sense of guilt fastens upon the transgressor like the coil of a serpent, which we cannot with all our striving and ingenuity shake off. In such a strait, with no forgiveness discoverable in nature and with no suggestion of it imprinted upon our own being, we learn the worth of revelation. We begin to be thankful that man's relation to God is involved in the earlier and much higher relation in which God stands

to man; that religion so far from being all expressed in man's service of, and man's prayers to God, consists far more in man's willingness to be helped and saved through listening to God, who is ever communicating His revelation. And we learn to be especially thankful that the God with whom we have to do is not the impassive force, or the abstract principle of some modern metaphysical theorists, but the God of the Bible—One who never can be "scientifically determined or defined," but who yet, as Carlyle thought, may be "imaginatively symbolised."<sup>1</sup> Such a Deity we feel we need, and just such a Deity, though by no possible searching could we find Him out, is represented in spite of nature without, and in spite of reason within us, as having first whispered through the prophets, and then as having proclaimed by His Son, and as finally having sealed the proclamation "with the blood of the cross," that with Him is forgiveness and with Him is plenteous redemption.

From the very beginning of the Bible there is revealed along with the Divine severity against sin, the Divine faithfulness to the sinful creature. As fallen through disobedience from the holiness of his Creator, man must bear the natural penalty for disobedience which is incorporated in the structure of the world and the constitution of human life. In that natural penalty there is expressed the Divine relation towards transgression, but not the whole Divine relation towards the transgressor. Were the Creator only immanent in and co-extensive with the universe, and were His whole mind

<sup>1</sup> Prof. E. Caird, "Genius of Carlyle," *Essays*, vol. i. p. 248.

and will uttered or set forth in natural laws, the revelation of forgiveness and redemption would be impossible. But while pervading the universe He transcends it. It witnesses to His eternal power and godhead, but it cannot embody them, and were it to vanish He would abide in all His attributes unchangeable. Behind and beyond all the laws that govern it, there is an infinite Being that is unexpressed, and in that sphere His spirit is free to meet the spirit of man, to hear his confession, and to answer his prayers. To Him therefore we are encouraged to appeal for mercy to pardon, and for grace to help. For though by our sin we have fallen from His holiness, no power in this or in any other creation can sever us from His faithfulness. The gulf of separation which we have by our guilt created is impassable from our side, and no atonement which we can procure could fill it up; but what is impossible with man is possible with God. Sin, the moment it became a fact or was conceived by the creature, found its atonement in God, who in the unsearchable depths of His eternal being took its burden upon Himself. So the chasm, if the Bible is to be trusted, has been bridged from the side of Deity, and yet, the only way in which His mediator with the message of forgiveness could reach us, was the way of Divine humiliation in the death of the Cross.<sup>1</sup>

If we think of the Creator only as King and Governor, bound to maintain all order in which the wellbeing of His creatures is involved by vindicating any breach of it,

<sup>1</sup> Hitchcock, *Eternal Atonement*, p. 25.

we may be satisfied with the theology which represents the sacrifice of Christ as the satisfaction of Divine justice, which had to be made in order to procure our forgiveness. Christ is thus our Redeemer, as having obtained Divine absolution by enduring as our representative in our stead a sufficient penalty for our sins. That He did suffer for sins "the just for the unjust,"<sup>1</sup> that "He bare our sins in His own body on the tree,"<sup>2</sup> that "His soul" was to be made "an offering for sin,"<sup>3</sup> is declared in Scripture with unmistakable clearness. Moreover, such a view is required to recall us from sentimental conceptions of the Divine benevolence, which really sully the glory of the Divine love, to the reality of the eternal righteousness by which the universe is governed. The sacrifice of Christ was a real satisfaction of the Divine justice, though of course it has never been maintained by the true expounders of this theory, that Christ suffered either in kind or degree what sinners ought to have endured in penalty. "As matter of fact His suffering transcends theirs, for just as the death of a saint would outweigh in significance the annihilation of a universe of gnats, so the suffering of the eternal God for sin immeasurably transcends in worth and power the penalty which a world of sinners would have endured."<sup>4</sup> The sacrifice of the one for the many, of the holy for the unholy, freely made by Christ as the Head and Representative of mankind,<sup>5</sup> would be a

<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter iii. 18.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Peter ii. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah liii. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Hodge, *System of Theology*,

vol. ii. p. 471.

<sup>5</sup> Dorner, *Hist. of Develop. of Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, vol. iii. div. 2, p. 232.

sufficient vindication of law, the universal sway of which God permits nothing to break through. But while this theory is scripturally true, it is not all the truth of Scripture concerning the sacrifice of Christ. It limits the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice to that only which was typified by the *trespass offerings* of the old economy, and leaves completely out of view what was foreshadowed in the *sin offerings*. While violated law might be vindicated by the trespass offering, only by the blood of the sin offering could transgression be atoned or ended. What Jehovah must exact as penalty, He may not, yea will not, accept as atonement. That is the difference between all the religions of the natural man, and the religion of the Bible. The former are based upon and proceed from the belief that Deity will be propitiated if only the penalty or a satisfaction can be paid; but the Bible teaches that no paying of the penalty, though law exacts it, will please God. Nothing will please God but sin atoned, covered, in fact exterminated; and this can be effected only when the life of the holy victim freely offered for the unholy suppliant is substituted in him. Although, therefore, it is true according to Scripture that Christ bore to the uttermost, even to the cross, the penalty or consequences of human sin, and thereby vindicated law, it is manifest that a fuller and more comprehensive view of the Divine sacrifice is required than that it was a satisfaction of the Divine justice.

The conceptions of Judge, and of King, do not exhaust the relations which God holds towards man.

The impartial Judge and righteous King is the faithful Creator, and Father of our spirits. The Divine sacrifice instead of being represented in Scripture as the condition upon which our forgiveness is obtained, is set forth as the medium by which forgiveness is declared and brought to us. Instead of being moved to forgive either by man's appeal or by Christ's intercession, God, in infinite pity, "sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved;" "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."<sup>1</sup> This eternal life is God's own life—the life of the Eternal Spirit through Whom Christ offered Himself to God, that this life might be communicated to us through His sacrifice. So, just as water from a pure fountain cleanses the foul and muddy stream, just as healthy blood cleanses out and expels disease, so the spring of Christ's sacrifice is efficacious to purify from all iniquity and cleanse from all sin. In the relation, therefore, not of an external Judge and Governor of the world altogether apart from it, but of the Creator of the world, the actual principle of life in nature, and the Father of a race degraded and suffering because of their sin, we must look for the source of all atonement.

Our own relation to sin either in ourselves or in others, helps us to realise how infinite holiness and love must be affected by it. If evil painfully affects us, it will affect a being infinitely purer and tenderer than we are, similarly, but in the degree of infinitude.

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 15-17.

The pain and shame of sin can never be felt in all their keenness by the sinner himself. When sin breaks out in a family, its burden falls most heavily upon the purest nature in it. When it broke out in the universe, the holiest and most loving being most realised the curse of it, and God as God, thus became the bearer of a burden which no creature could bear. The moral Ruler of the universe is thus revealed in relation to human sin as not merely omnipotent, self-centred, majestic, inflicting the penalties due to transgression that He may vanquish and overwhelm it, but as Himself submitting to the consequences of sin, by enduring because of it that which no sinner can endure, and into which the angels desire to look. He is the only One who can perfectly comprehend the significance of sin, and therefore the only One who can perfectly bear its weight. And so the moment sin was committed, yea the moment it was conceived, it was matched by redemption; for God's infinite comprehension of its meaning, His infinite passion under it as an intolerable thing, enabled Him alone of all beings to forgive the sinner, and upon the basis of His own sorrow for it to work out eventually in history, as already in His eternal thought, a complete salvation from it. Thus from the postulate of Deity we may deduce the Incarnation; for the creation of the world involves its redemption from the evil which has invaded it. He who made man in His own image will at any cost to Himself endeavour to save man from his sin and its consequences; but the only symbol

which can adequately set forth the relation of the Creator to the sins of His creatures, is the Divine sacrifice of Christ. So He who is everlastingly giving Himself for the service of His universe, is revealed in the Old Testament as pitying their infirmities and as being grieved for the hardness of their heart, and in the New Testament is disclosed as seeking to vanquish their obduracy by enduring, in His invincible patience and love, a suffering and sorrow *for* sin such as sinners never could endure *in* it. It is in this direction we must look, if we would apprehend—

*Secondly—The Nature of the Divine Sacrifice in Jesus Christ our Lord.*

From what we have already learned, we shall not be inclined—in inquiring into the nature of the sacrifice of Christ—to restrict our views wholly to His ministry upon earth. His death upon the cross was the consummation in time of the Divine sacrifice; but for its commencement, we must look to that point in Christ's pre-existence, when it became necessary to set forth His father's mind and will in regard to sin. St. Paul and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews seem to indicate a series of stages in the mysterious descent or humiliation through which He had to pass before He found the body which His Father had prepared for Him.<sup>1</sup> In all these stages delighting to do His will, He was making atonement as truly as when He cried upon His cross "It is finished." Nevertheless there must be a peculiar and distinctive efficacy in the

<sup>1</sup> Phil. ii. 5-8; Hebrews ii. 16.

sufferings which He endured, and in the death which He accomplished at Jerusalem, which lifts His atoning sacrifice far above the sacrificial types of the Law. Under the Law, the suffering of the victim was slight, and its death was only of value as liberating the blood in which was the life; but according to the New Testament the sufferings and death of Christ are peculiarly efficacious. We are said through the fellowship of His *sufferings* to attain unto the resurrection of the dead, and through being baptised into His *death* to rise into newness of life.<sup>1</sup> The Apostolic witnesses never refer to these experiences as only incidental to His mission—as calamities in which He happened to be involved. They tell us plainly that His mission was to suffer and to die upon the cross; and when we remember that He was the only one in human history whose suffering was not traceable to any fault in Himself which suffering could correct, or to any sin which it might cleanse away, it becomes difficult and perhaps impossible to account for His sufferings in any other way than Scripture has accounted for them. They were absolutely essential for His Divine ministry of redemption, indispensable in the life of One who would declare God's "righteousness for the remission of sins that are past," that God "might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."<sup>2</sup>

For the sufferings of Christ were not such as are common to man; they were peculiar to Himself. He had indeed more than an ordinary share of the cross

<sup>1</sup> Phil. iii. 10-11; Rom. vi. 3-5.

<sup>2</sup> Romans iii. 25, 26.

which the Fall had laid upon humanity, but in addition to that cross which He assumed, He had to bear His own. Hunger, and thirst, and toil; disappointment of high hopes; rejection of pure love; the torture of a most revolting death, do not explain, do not even touch the mystery of His passion. In enduring these He proved the reality of His fellowship in our suffering, but the fellowship of His suffering which we are to know in order to attain unto His resurrection is another matter. That meant a travail of soul which the Lamb of God must endure in order to bear away the sin of the world. To apprehend correctly this suffering, we must have a proper conception of the sufferer. There was no sorrow like unto the Saviour's sorrow, because there never was any one like unto the Saviour Himself. His sufferings were exceptional and transcendent, because the Sufferer was unique. Susceptibility to suffering is exactly proportioned to the volume and quality of life in those who are called to endure it. A sorrow which falls lightly upon the little child may break the heart of its mother. So when we realise who and what Christ was, we discover how essential was suffering to the fulfilment of His mission; for as soon as He awoke to its significance, His mission became a passion, involving Him in a life which we could not live, and in a death which we could not die.

For example, He suffered through His innocence, which was outraged every moment by the sinfulness of His surroundings. No one but He could realise the kind of world He lived in, for its wickedness, and waste, and

desolation were hid from every eye but His own. No sinful man, it has been truly said, "can understand the kind of being he is in himself; even his remorse and misery are imperfectly appreciated by him." This disordered world suits our sinful state, and life in it is bearable, as existence in a lazar-house is bearable to a leper. What must this world and the race that inhabit it have been to One who was holy, harmless, and undefiled? To be holy in a world where all else are evil—to have its wickedness and wretchedness confronting Him at every step—must have involved suffering. True comprehension of sin implies agony for it, and the agony will always be proportioned to the absence of sin from the soul. The holier the soul, the truer is the comprehension of sin, and the greater is the passion because of it. His very presence as one perfectly sinless in a sinful world, involved Him in a suffering because of sin immeasurably transcending any penalty that could be inflicted upon sinners; and so because He knew no sin He had to bear it.

For along with His sinlessness we must consider His sympathy. Purity gave Him insight into the significance of human guilt and misery, and love made Him assume the full weight of them. He bore our griefs, He carried our sorrows: on Him were laid all our iniquities, not by compulsion, and yet from a necessity which the words compassion and pity are too feeble to express. Just because He never experienced the sickness of disease or the pangs of remorse, He endured in His compassion far more than those

who were subject to them. In the tenderness of more than human sensibility He felt the loathsomeness of leprosy more keenly than the leper, and the pangs of remorse were more painful to His pure pity than to the conscience-stricken traitor. One with God in His holiness, one with us in His absolute sympathy, the sorrows of all men were flowing constantly in upon Him to carry, and the sins of all men were being laid upon Him to bear. He alone caught the true impression of human sin and sorrow which our natures are too gross and dull to receive. So feeling perfectly one with us in our wretchedness, He laboured and wrestled, and made supplication with strong crying and tears; yea, through His death made prevailing intercession; even as the Holy Spirit under our burden "maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."<sup>1</sup>

It is a fact in human experience, that no one ever truly comforted the sorrowful, without sharing to some extent their sorrow. No one ever effectually prayed for others, without feeling weak in their feebleness, sore in their trial, or miserable under their sin. Just so far as we pass into the lives of others, and assume their load, are we able to help them. Therefore, it was out of this travail of soul, this absolute sympathy

<sup>1</sup> Romans viii. 26. Dr. Macleod Campbell's theory of Christ's death as a confession of human sin to God is to this extent true. No one but Christ could confess our sin and utter the whole truth concerning it as He did in suffer-

ing for it. He alone, as Himself sinless, could glorify God in His condemnation of sin, and so His death is not only a confession, but the most powerful of all intercessions for the race whose Head He is.

whereby Christ was afflicted in all our affliction, that His power to heal, to forgive, and to redeem proceeded. The power to heal and forgive was a sovereign power, but it was the reverse of being impassive. He had, it is true, only to speak in order to deliver and pardon ; but how much He must have felt before He could utter the word of pardon or of help, no sinner can conceive. A miracle of help implied the giving away of Himself in pity : power whenever He healed went out of Him, so that living for others meant in His case dying daily. It was by taking them upon Himself that He took away men's diseases ; it was because He alone felt perfectly with and for the victims of sin that He was conscious of Divine authority to forgive the sinner. And so His power to save from sin was rooted in His infinite capacity to suffer for it ; and the atoning efficacy of His sacrifice lay in the agony of His love.

That His sufferings were thus essentially vicarious and for sin, is plainly indicated by the fact, that what troubled His soul was not the hardships which He encountered in the discharge of His duties, nor even the wrongs and indignities which were inflicted upon Him. He bore all these in silence ; but His soul was troubled when He groaned in spirit at the grave of Lazarus,<sup>1</sup> when He wept with lamentations over Jerusalem,<sup>2</sup> and when He cried in the hour of seeming triumph in the courts of the temple, "Father save Me from this hour."<sup>3</sup> So when that trouble of soul reached its climax in Gethsemane, it was not con-

<sup>1</sup> John x. 33.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xix. 41.

<sup>3</sup> John xii. 27.

sideration for Himself that brought the agony upon Him. The mystery of that experience we can only contemplate, as did the disciples when half awake, in dim uncertain light, and as at the distance of a stone's cast—but we see clearly enough to discern that it was not just as a man that Christ on that occasion paid His tribute to human suffering. Were that so, Gethsemane would be a stumbling block to our faith in Him even as an example. Good men do not dread dying, and before as well as after Him, God's saints have met deaths as cruel as His with calm resignation. Some one whom I cannot remember has contrasted Socrates, who took without emotion the cup which was to send his soul on into a state of the nature of which he was ignorant, and of the existence of which he had only a presentiment, with Christ who, knowing that He was passing from man's injustice to God's gentleness, wrestled before His death as exceeding sorrowful to die. The two lives are, indeed, representative lives, and yet they are found separated by an infinite distance when we test them by the comprehension, insight, sensitivity, which they display. Alone of all who have been and are and will be subject to mortality, Christ knew the full meaning of death to man, and as He confronted His own death, there was revealed to Him the complete significance of the guilt of those who had brought it about. It has been truly said that the death of Jesus "is the highest revelation of the Divine life in man, in conflict with the evil of the world,"<sup>1</sup> but the only One by whom that

<sup>1</sup> Prof. E. Caird, *The Evolution of Religion*, vol. ii. p. 191.

revelation has ever been fully comprehended, was the Saviour Himself. Through that one crime which His enemies were about to perpetrate, there was disclosed to Him the full significance of human sin in its totality. Looking into the abyss of evil thus opened up, the Holy Spirit of God and the sinful spirit of man were brought face to face as they had never before been. And the result was the agony, a sorrow like unto no man's sorrow, a passion which could not bend His will, strong in its invincible holiness, but which broke His heart as more than humanity could bear.

In that supreme act of suffering, all possible suffering was gathered up into one unique and intolerable pang. The groanings of humanity and the travail of creation were all concentrated in the passion of the Son of God, the Son of Man. Terribly real in its torture and its desolation, it was after all symbolic of a more awful reality. Through the broken heart of the Son—the rending of the veil in the great temple of the universe,—we catch a glimpse of the mystery of the Holy of Holies into which the angels adoringly look. We see upon what the great altar of the mercy seat is founded, namely, the faithfulness of the Creator. Infinite in feeling, in comprehension, in holiness, in love, all our sins and their consequences are assumed by Him as His burden. The greatest sufferer for sin, seeing He alone understands it, He has power to forgive and to redeem its victims. He is able, in virtue of what He endures, to save to the uttermost from it; so He will vanquish sin, not by overwhelming it with penalty, nor by annihilating the

opposition of the sinner by irresistible force, but by moving the heart and conscience of the sinner to hate it as He does. The enduring meekness of holy love violated by sin, is a power infinitely greater than any force that could annihilate it. When we see omnipotence seeking "to overcome all opposition only by bearing its utmost expression," the evil of our sin becomes intolerable to us, and its power sinks exhausted before the power of Divine patience. By enduring the very worst it can inflict, Christ disarms and annuls it, for the revelation of His passion in which our forgiveness springs becomes grace of true repentance in every soul that receives it. It evolves

"The moral qualities of man—how else?  
To make him love in turn, and be beloved,  
Creative and self sacrificing too,  
And thus eventually God-like."<sup>1</sup>

And so, *Thirdly*—*The effect and end of the Divine sacrifice* is the remission of sin and the reconciliation of all things to God. Remission of sin according to the teaching of Scripture does not mean simply the removal of a penalty or the wiping out of a debt. Such a remission may indicate sentimental weakness in the person who forgives, and it may lead to very immoral results by making transgression an easy matter. Scripture knows of no forgiveness which merely remits a penalty. By its very nature forgiveness affects the heart. It is always intended to destroy the sinful impulse or motive in the person forgiven, and so prove

<sup>1</sup> Browning, *The Ring and The Book*, "The Pope," 1378-1383.

the spring of a true repentance. "Christ saves us not from pain but from that which makes us flee from pain, He died to save us not from suffering, but from death—a death which involves our liking that which is evil."<sup>1</sup> Now it has not been sufficiently set forth in our theologies—though it is implied in our forms of prayer—that true repentance in man has its source in the Divine nature. True repentance is a grace which we very properly ask the God of all grace to bestow upon us ("that it would please Thee to bestow upon us the grace of a true repentance"). It originates in the Divine sorrow for man's sinful condition, of which we have a revelation in Scripture as early as the prophecy of the Deluge,<sup>2</sup> and in the mission of Christ we have the revelation completed. Not that we are to regard the Divine sacrifice as a makeshift contrived to influence men's emotions for moral and spiritual ends: it was the natural and inevitable disclosure of the extent to which the Divine nature is affected by sin. We have already observed that the sufferings of Christ are never represented as having any value in moving God to forgive sin, seeing it was really God who endured them; but the forgiveness of God declared and brought to man by a suffering Messiah has immense value in changing man's mind in regard to sin, by drawing him into fellowship with Christ's sufferings and God's sorrow for sin.

So the first effect of the Divine sacrifice, is not to

<sup>1</sup> Hinton, *Man and his Dwelling Place*, pp. 219, 238.

<sup>2</sup> Genesis vi. 6, 7.

relieve us from the fear of punishment, but to condemn in us the love of sin and to reconcile us to the will of God. The infinite love of God revealed in Christ could be satisfied with nothing less; for love is an attribute essentially ethical, which never can for its own gratification override the higher considerations of what is right and good. In pitying the sufferer, it has regard both to the real occasion or origin of the suffering, and the moral purpose which it may be made to serve. Even we cannot ignore the fact that there are worse evils than suffering, and that to wrong-doers suffering may be the greatest and only blessing. So while Divine love has soothing for suffering, it has indignation against sin. It is infinitely just, even as Divine justice is infinitely loving. Divine love can only desire what infinite justice demands. Both attributes condemn sin, and seek the salvation of the sinner. Both go forth after the sinner for his redemption, and both find their satisfaction in seeing the sinner saved from all unrighteousness, even though the suffering caused by his sin be used as the means of his sanctification. It is sin that is atoned, not suffering; and suffering may, yea, does continue, when the sin has been forgiven and covered. As long as sin is unforgiven, there is a sense of alienation and of Divine wrath, even though no suffering follows transgression as its immediate penalty: but when sin is felt to be truly forgiven, all sense of alienation and of Divine wrath is destroyed. Then though suffering as its natural consequence may continue, its character is changed. It is no longer a curse

expressive of anger, it is transformed into a means of grace, a blessed discipline through which we outgrow the sin that caused it, as though it had never been.

So "what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh"—that is, weak not in itself, for it is perfect, but in its subjects whose carnal minds due to the Fall render its precepts and threatenings and promises a dead letter—"God, sending His own Son in the *likeness* of sinful flesh, and for sin," or, as an offering for sin—that is, in a nature truly human but sinless—"condemned sin in the flesh."<sup>1</sup> The Law could and did condemn *us* for sin, but it could not condemn sin *in* us; but Christ sinless in the likeness of sinful flesh condemned sin as unnatural and inhuman. Instead of being essential or inherent in our nature, He showed in His own person, that man invested in a true body and reasonable soul can be holy, harmless, and undefiled. Then by His sufferings in the flesh for sin, He condemned sin as essentially hostile to God and man, as bent always and only upon the destruction of what is good. By revealing not only the immeasurable loss to man because of it, but its infinite cost to God, He taught us the real meaning of it, and unsealed the fountains of Divine sorrow which melt our obduracy into penitence. When the infinite love that bore our sins is shed abroad in human hearts it destroys the sinful impulse, and by making us sorrow for sin as God sorrows over it, hate it as God hates it, and turn from

<sup>1</sup> Romans viii. 3.

it as God turns from it, it inaugurates a new life, in which the law of God as the expression of His own life is no longer outside and beyond us, but has become within us our most powerful inspiration.

“For judgment I am come into this world,” said Christ,<sup>1</sup> and truly by His coming, and especially by the manner in which men sent Him out of the world, sin was judged as it had never been. No Divine retribution with which the wickedness of men or nations has been visited, can beget such convictions of the heinousness and horror of sin as are produced by the revelation of the Cross of Christ. In that revelation we begin to know God, and to understand ourselves. We are made to realise how inexpressibly inhuman the race of which we are members have become, and yet while thus self-condemned, we adore God in Christ for the revelation of what He desires and is able to make us. He who suffered by us and for us even to the death of the cross, in His love is mighty to save, to lift us out of our sin and to make us loving sons of God like Himself. For so close is the relation which unites the destiny of each of us with that of the Son of Man as our Head, that His sacrifice includes and gives efficacy to our surrender in penitence to God. And thus in His dying we die, and in His resurrection we are raised unto life eternal.

Therefore we must not limit the efficacy of His sacrifice to the negative effect of condemning and destroying in us the sinful habit and the sinful impulse, for there are positive results which from the first our

<sup>1</sup> John ix. 39.

Lord had in view. He came, by revealing His own unity with God His Father, to assure us that in spite of our broken unity with God, we are still capable of becoming one with Him. That broken unity He came to reknit, by communicating to us the Divine eternal life which He had in Himself. Only Son of God by generation, "as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God."<sup>1</sup> We have already seen how conscious He was all through His ministry, that it was only through the apparent annihilation of Himself that He could fulfil His mission. Out of His absolute self-abnegation, out of His single life crushed in death, would spring the multiplication of Himself in the endlessly increasing kingdom of His Father.<sup>2</sup> Thus He "emptied Himself"<sup>3</sup> that the people who were to be begotten of Him "might be filled with all the fulness of God." In His doctrine, in His example, and especially in His death, He revealed the law which must be observed by all who desire "to keep their life unto life eternal," the law of self-sacrifice. He has shown us what it is for man to be as a creature made in the image of God. Man's true life must be God's own life, yet that life was revealed in Christ's life of utter self-abnegation. We only begin to live when we mind the things which Christ minded, and walk according to Christ's rule, "He that loveth his life shall lose it: and he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal."<sup>4</sup> By

<sup>1</sup> John i. 12.

<sup>2</sup> John xii. 23, 24.

<sup>3</sup> Phil. ii. 7.

<sup>4</sup> All the evangelists have recorded this saying, which, probably as the central truth of

the surrender of the present life, we attain to a fuller and higher; by the sacrifice of self, the true self will be realised. There is no other way possible of fulfilling our true destiny. "It is only with self-renunciation that true life can begin."<sup>1</sup> "There is but one sole virtue in the world, the eternal sacrifice of self."<sup>2</sup> If we would be honoured of the Father as Christ the Son is honoured, we must serve in the same spirit and after the same fashion as Christ the Son has served.<sup>3</sup>

The appeal which Christ makes to us through His sacrifice is not addressed to our pity, because He was

Christ's teaching, was very often upon His lips. Four times at least, in different connexions, and with different shades of meaning, He is recorded to have repeated it. Thus, when warning His disciples of the troubles and family divisions and hostilities which following Him would entail, He said "He that *findeth* his life shall *lose* it; and he that *loseth* his life for My sake shall *find* it" (Matt. x. 39). Again, addressing the disciples after His rebuke of St. Peter, He said, "Whosoever would *save* his life shall *lose* it, and whosoever shall *lose* his life for My sake ('and the Gospel's' Mark viii. 35), shall *find* (Mark and Luke ix. 24, 'save') it." (Matt. xvi. 25). Towards the close of His ministry, in predicting the judgments which would fall upon the world at the unexpected coming of the Son of Man, He reminded them of the same law. "Whosoever shall seek

to *gain* his life, shall *lose* it; but whosoever shall *lose* his life shall *preserve* it," or bring it to a new birth (Luke xvii. 33). And once again in the day of His apparent triumph in the temple, when with soul stirred by the request of the Greeks to see Him, He prophesied of the harvests which would spring from the seed of His life, cast into the earth to die, He said, "He that *loveth* his life *loseth* it; and he that *hath* his life in this world shall *keep* it unto life eternal" (John xii. 24). There may be a progression of thought in the four sayings, but the central truth is unmistakable. To *find* life in our own way, to wish to *preserve* it, to seek to *gain* it, to *love* it, say of it, it is all or the best I can have, is to lose it altogether.

<sup>1</sup> Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*.

<sup>2</sup> George Sand.

<sup>3</sup> John xii. 26.

the greatest of sufferers, nor is it addressed to our admiration because He was the greatest of heroes. He addresses it to our conscience as the interpreter of the great moral law that governs us, the revealer of our true life. The ideal is indeed high; it is not only sublime, it is Divine; but it has been realised in Him. And once that it is disclosed to us, we consent that it is just what we were made for, and what we ought to be. We confess that God would cease to be God, and we should cease to be human, if He demanded or we could be satisfied with less. The renunciation involved is not the abandonment of what is sinful, for that is demanded by prudence and self-interest; nor is it the ascetic renunciation of what is really human and natural, for that would be "spiritual suicide"; it is the abnegation of self in every form of self-pleasing or self-advancement. It is the complete surrender or offering up of the whole being to the control of Christ, even as He offered Himself to God His Father, that we may be "imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, even as Christ also loved us, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odour of a sweet smell."<sup>1</sup> He did so, that He might both leave us an example and impart to us the disposition to imitate and follow Him. "Though he was rich" in the fulness of everything which constitutes our ideal of happiness, "yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich."<sup>2</sup> That is, rich in that spirit of charity in which the Divine

<sup>1</sup> Ephesians v. 2.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Corinthians viii. 9.

blessedness consists, and which made Him count it a joy to pass from the highest extreme of glory, to the lowest extreme of humiliation, that He might fulfil His Father's will in meeting our terrible necessities.<sup>1</sup> All that is required of us is that we open our hearts "to receive" this grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. For just as they who love are sure to serve, and just as they who learn are sure to teach, so they who experience the "charity" of Christ will surely show it forth to all who need it.

So the life unto which we are redeemed by Christ is His own life of sacrifice. Sacrifice, instead of being a temporary expedient to secure some good or avert some evil, is both the motive and ultimate goal of our religion as life eternal. It is the supreme blessedness of being—the blessedness essential to the Being of infinite love. For as there is no one in the universe from whom God can receive anything, seeing all things are absolutely His own, His blessedness must consist in everlastingly dispensing what is peculiarly His own. By bestowing upon us all that we need He has given us the great blessedness of receiving; and by imparting to us the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ He has conferred upon us the higher and greater blessedness of giving, and so He has made it possible for us to enter into His joy. According to the eternal law, it is only as we communicate that we receive the blessing. We possess of it only what we share; we have of it only what we use. To refuse, or to neglect to extend to others the forgiveness which we

<sup>1</sup> Philippians ii. 5-8; Hebrews xii. 2.

have received, the comfort which we have experienced, or the peace which we enjoy, is to lose them altogether. So if Christ through His sacrifice has brought to us salvation, salvation is sacrifice.

And this is a higher, nobler, worthier Gospel for humanity than that of Altruism, at least as it is popularly expounded and applied. The Altruism of modern romance lacks both strength of motive and purity of aim; even as expressed in some of our highest poetry it seems unable to lose sight or even grip of self. When praying to reach

"That purest heaven, be to other souls  
A cup of strength in some great agony,"

it seems to be at best like the true Buddhist arhat,<sup>1</sup> selfishly unselfish. Moreover, we can never truly live for others if we only trust to our own love of them for inspiration. That must be drawn from the source of a nobler and higher love. In ordaining His apostle to the ministry of pure love, our Lord did not demand, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou these, my sheep, my lambs, whom thou art to feed and tend?" but "Simon, son of Jonas, *lovest thou Me more than these?*" It was the demand He had already made, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me cannot be My disciple," and here as then He made it in the name of His Father, who in revealing His law had demanded, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and

<sup>1</sup> A man who through his own efforts to be good is close upon attaining perfection, and so upon winning Nirvana as his reward.

with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." For it is only in the higher service of God that our fellow-man is truly served, and we cannot love our brother as we should, till we are constrained by the love of Christ. This is His commandment, "that we all love one another as He hath loved us." Without this constraint and dominance of the supreme love of Christ, Altruism will prove only a morality; any self-denial there is in it will be tainted with expediency, and never prove the spirit and joy of life. It is only through the constraint of the love of Christ that self-denial becomes self-oblivion, in which we are free to give ourselves up for others, as He, constrained by His Father's love, gave Himself up for us. In doing so He was not conscious of any act of renunciation. He did not feel that He was abandoning any good thing His Father had given Him; certainly He did not despise or throw any good thing away. He was only able to let them slip at the call of love, in the delight of doing His Father's will. He simply forgot His own felicity in seizing the opportunity of lightening the misery of others, and so, merging His personal life in the life of God, He realised God's blessedness. "There never was upon earth a being so deep in His peace, so pure in His joy, so essentially blessed as He was. The deepest in painful sacrifices for others, He lived at the highest pitch of beatitude."<sup>1</sup> The most precious legacy which He could bequeath to His disciples was His "peace."<sup>2</sup> His largest prayer for those whom He loved was that they

<sup>1</sup> Bushnell, *The Vicarious Sacrifice*, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> John xiv. 27.

might have His "joy fulfilled in themselves," and yet that was the peace, that was the joy, of the most troubled and sorrowful life which the world has ever seen.

And so it has been with all who have "known" or experienced the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. In proportion as they have appropriated His love through devotion to Him, there has been revealed to them the real worth and glory of life. St. Paul, for example, whose life from his conversion may be described as one long sacrifice, never for a moment hesitated as to the course which he had chosen to follow. He simply could not help himself. "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him;" "that I may know Him, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death."<sup>1</sup> To the worldly-wise of his own or of any other generation, to the "men who will praise us when we do well to ourselves,"<sup>2</sup> he seemed a fool and a fanatic who was missing life altogether, in so trampling upon all chances of promoting his own interests. Very different, however, is the verdict of history upon him. It is easy indeed to conceive of a happier life than his was, but it is difficult to conceive of a nobler. Between the kind of life which we are tempted to choose for ourselves at first, and that which we at last extol in others, there is a mighty difference. To the youth beginning life, nothing seems so attractive as ease,

<sup>1</sup> Philippians iii. 7-11.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm xlix. 13.

leisure, self-enjoyment; to the same being when life on earth is ending, all these have lost their fascination, and he would thankfully barter them for one opportunity of enduring hardness, or of making a sacrifice for the sake of duty. St. Paul could not live otherwise than he chose to live, without being tormented by the remorseful discovery that he had ruined his felicity and thrown away life's grandest opportunity. As it was, he not only finished, he ran his course, with joy. In pouring forth his life as a libation upon the sacrifice and service of the Church, for the redemption of a wretched world, he experienced more real joy than the most prosperous of selfish men ever derived from all the luxuries and pleasures they could covet.

It is manifest that sin is atoned, covered, ended, in all in whom the mind of Christ has been substituted for their own selfish wills. Love is the fulfilling of the law. That Christ has communicated this mind or spirit to humanity, not only St. Paul and the noble army of martyrs, but the Church which He has founded are witnesses. True, it doth not yet appear what the Church shall be; mortal hath not put on immortality, and the Church in too many respects is most unlike its glorious Head. Yet, since He has called His Church into existence, the world is not, and never can be again, what it was before. The spirit of Christ's sacrifice is influencing not only individuals, but communities, to accept and magnify the law by which the innocent suffers willingly for the guilty, and by which the saint works out his

own salvation in labouring for the undeserving, and in dying for the redemption of his enemies. Society is based upon the understanding that the good must bear the cross of the evil and come between them and the full consequences of their wrong-doing. All institutions for the relief of the distressed, for the reclamation of the lost, and for the restoration of the ruined; yea, every purifying and regenerating influence that is traceable in the world, is the fruit of the sacrifice of Christ. Progress in realising the Divine ideal may, indeed, appear to be very slight, but His spirit is affecting all life with sufficient power to justify the prophecy, that He will eventually reign supreme in every domain of human thought and action. Had humanity never fallen, it would have been His, as the "First born" through whom and unto whom all things were created,<sup>1</sup> and now by the sacrifice and ransom of His life for our race, He is slowly but surely winning back His dominion and recovering what had been lost.

The fact that we are living and moving and having our being in a spiritual atmosphere saturated with ideas of sacrifice such as never entered the mind of any believer in its efficacy before Christ suffered, is in itself an indication that He has fulfilled all that the universal rite of sacrifice pointed to and predicted. Very different are the conceptions which man naturally forms of sacrifice, from the reality of sacrifice revealed in Christ. What to man seems to be the equivalent of loss, the

<sup>1</sup> Colossians i. 16-17.

reluctant surrender of some good to procure something better, is in Christ disclosed as the *summum bonum*, the fulness of the Divine joy.<sup>1</sup> So we need not wonder that, as far back as we can trace revelation, God, instead of demanding sacrifice from men, is represented as working to bring near to them His salvation. That salvation He has now so revealed, that the ends of the world are receiving it. As a revelation it is final, but the interpretation of it is only proceeding, and notwithstanding all the experience gained during eighteen centuries, we still know and prophesy concerning it only in part. The systems of religious thought which we have outgrown, the theologies that have become obsolete, warn us against concluding that in our cherished theories we have attained to perfect understanding of the fact of the Saviour's sacrifice. The framers and expounders of those relinquished systems did not sufficiently realise the facts of the Gospel, and of man's moral and spiritual consciousness. Nor could they recognise what we have to reckon with, in the other Divine side-lights of science and philosophy with which God is ever testing our theological systems. Inadequate though they were, their systems served their time, and were moving powers in the Church for good. The chief of them, founded upon the supremacy

<sup>1</sup> "I think this is the authentic sign and seal  
Of Godship, that it ever waxes glad,  
And more glad, until gladness blossoms, bursts  
Into a rage to suffer for mankind  
And recommence at sorrow."

BROWNING, *Balaustion's Adventure*.

of God the Almighty King and Righteous Judge, bore witness to essential truth, and produced not only heroic confessors, but generations of holy and helpful men. The theology of this age is founded upon the Fatherhood of God, but unless we include in that Fatherhood His eternal sovereignty and inexorable justice, we may be misled into drawing from it inferences or conclusions which are both dishonouring to God and degrading to humanity. The probability that our present theology will be modified need not painfully concern us, for the spirit of truth will lead the Church from knowledge to knowledge, and as long as the essential fact of God's relationship to us is firmly apprehended, we may be confident that no modification of our theology will subvert or endanger the faith. "We have the word of prophecy made more sure; whereunto we do well that we take heed,"<sup>1</sup> that God the Creator, is Jehovah the Redeemer, of man. The Eternal, Almighty Sovereign of the universe, the Righteous Judge of all, is the everlasting surety of all who believe in His Son. For "when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman," that is, involved in our nature; "born under the law," that is, involved in its penalty; "that He might redeem them which were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."<sup>2</sup> So "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself."<sup>3</sup> "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God hath sent His only begotten Son into the world, that

<sup>1</sup> 2 Peter i. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Galatians iv. 4.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Corinth. v. 19.

we might live through Him.”<sup>1</sup> That love which in Christ was seen to do and suffer for us the very uttermost—even to passing through the gates of death to save us—is bound to disarm and vanquish the very uttermost of human enmity and hatred of God.

The Householder of the parable said of the husbandmen, “They will reverence my Son.”<sup>2</sup> And after mankind had slain and cast forth God’s well-beloved Son, they did begin to reverence Him. When they looked upon Him whom they had pierced, they were themselves pierced with penitential sorrow for the evil they had done. They saw from His holy nature what was the original measure and capacity of their own, and not only by contrast with their sinful nature, but by their rejection of Him, they learned what a fearful thing their own nature had become; and in this Divine regret which seized them “they were taken captive by the Lord’s servant unto the will of God.”<sup>3</sup> So “now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ;”<sup>4</sup> “you, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish and unreprouable before Him,”<sup>5</sup> so washed, so cleansed, so sanctified that not to do the will of God would be a hardship. Thus God is becoming to men what He is to His beloved Son, and men who receive not the grace of God in vain, will eventually be one in the Father

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iv. 9.    <sup>2</sup> Matt. xxi. 38.    <sup>3</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 26, cp. Revised Version.

<sup>4</sup> Ephes. ii. 13, Revised Version.    <sup>5</sup> Coloss. i. 21, Revised Version.

and in the Son. For "the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou has sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me."<sup>1</sup>

UNTO HIM THAT LOVED US, AND WASHED US FROM OUR SINS IN HIS OWN BLOOD, AND HATH MADE US KINGS AND PRIESTS UNTO GOD AND HIS FATHER; TO HIM BE GLORY AND DOMINION FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN.

#### POSTSCRIPT

In our survey of religions other than Christian I have not directly included the great religion of Rome. We have been considering only one feature in all those religions—sacrificial worship—in relation to one article of our faith, the sacrifice of Christ; and though the sacrificial system of Rome was very comprehensive, it presented no features additional to those which have already occupied our attention. All the ideas and conceptions of sacrifice elsewhere set forth were, however, clearly exhibited in it. The Roman was the most polytheist of all ancient religions, for it imported all the deities of other peoples on which it could lay its hands, and adopted and naturalised every cult which it could discover. In addition, it created new deities whenever

<sup>1</sup> John xvii. 22, 23.

some extraordinary occurrence emerged which seemed to render it necessary or desirable to provide them. Consequently, the Roman religion may be said to have summed up and concentrated all forms of heathen belief and worship, so that in coming into conflict with Rome, Christianity really found its first Armageddon.

Roman ceremonial worship was certainly very elaborate and minute, and made very extensive demands upon the time and the resources of the people. Public and private life had to be conducted according to a system most rigidly enforced by the Pontifical College, and no important public undertaking could be proceeded with, yea, no private pursuit could be begun, without the assistance and the offices of the diviners being first secured properly to "*inaugurate*"<sup>1</sup> it. Its calendar was red with redundancy of festivals in honour of particular gods, of national events, and of natural seasons. It prescribed such annual celebrations as the Feralia, in which the dead were worshipped and feasted by offerings at their tombs; and as the Lemuria, in which the land was purified, and the evil spirits were exorcised with great solemnity from the homes. It exacted an enormous amount of animal slaughter for purposes of augury, and even of human beings, as far down as the days of Hadrian, for various ends.<sup>2</sup> Expiations were frequently demanded, not for moral offences, but for ceremonial mistakes and breaches of order. The doctrine of *opus operatum* dominated all

<sup>1</sup> The etymology of the word tells its story.

<sup>2</sup> Comp. *Marius the Epicurean*, by W. Pater, vol. ii. pp. 51-53.

these observances, for, provided the ceremony was correctly performed, the intention was considered to be of little importance; yet a single mistake was believed to be fatal, and the whole function had to be begun anew. All these sacrificial ceremonies were religious, not in our sense of the word, as binding men to obey the will of Deity; they were performed in the spirit, and with the intention of the barbarians, of binding the gods to further the interests and the wishes of men.

Indeed, it was in the religion of cultured Rome that the idea of making the gods subserve the good of men received its highest expression. If Rome borrowed from nearly every other religion what it could, it was with the definite purpose of applying what it adopted to very different uses. Elsewhere religion was a natural growth, never dissociated from, but nourished by belief as represented in the popular mythology; in Rome religion was a manufactured ceremonial devised and established for the maintenance of the State. As long as the observances required by law were properly attended to, the people were free to believe what they pleased. Elsewhere the gods were regarded with affection or reverence, but in Rome the one supreme object of reverence and worship was the Roman State, and all the gods—even the greatest of them—were only its officials and ministers. It was solely for ends of government that the deities of other nations were recognised; they were domiciled in Rome very much with the same intention which led the Mexicans to imprison the idols of conquered tribes to prevent them

escaping to help their vanquished votaries. Even Jupiter Maximus was subordinated to the interests of the Capitol which he guarded. Accordingly Mommsen has told us<sup>1</sup> that "Roman religion in all its details was simply a reflection of the Roman State, so that when changes occurred in the constitution of the State they were followed by similar changes in the institutions of religion." Religion was designedly employed to promote the stability of Rome, and the gods as truly as men were under rule to extend and establish its authority.

It seems to us a very profane conception of the relations subsisting between gods and men ; nevertheless in Rome it produced results not observable in other forms of polytheism. Elsewhere public religion was divorced from morality, but in Rome it was so controlled as to further such moral interests as are involved in good citizenship. It was this idea of rule, order, regularity, dominating every domain of public and private life, which gave Rome its marvellous vitality and strength. Law founded upon equity was the guiding genius of the makers of the great Roman world. The Platonic ideal set forth in *Crifo* was attempted to be realised in Rome from the earliest. Cicero, in his book *De Legibus*, is the expounder of its fundamental principle, "that man is born for justice, that law and equity are not established by opinion, but by nature." The appeal, therefore, was directed to conscience, not to expediency. So as civilisation advanced "stern rule expanded into

<sup>1</sup> *History of Rome*, chap. xii.

liberal jurisprudence," and law ripened into justice, while religion declined into gross superstition among the ignorant, and into unbelief among the educated.<sup>1</sup> And law, and society organised by it, was Rome's legacy to mankind. Its well-compacted system of jurisprudence was assumed and codified under Justinian almost without alteration. For "the immutable principles of justice had been so clearly discerned by the inflexible rectitude of the Roman mind, and had been so sagaciously applied by the wisdom of her great lawyers, that Christianity was content to acquiesce in these statutes, which she might despair, except in some respects, of rendering more equitable."<sup>2</sup>

So Rome as powerfully as Greece influenced the development of Christianity. The organisation of the Roman State was reproduced in the Latin or Western Church, and the formulation of its doctrine was manifestly affected by the genius of Roman law. Greece gave to Christianity its unrivalled language, rendering possible its wide extension over the civilised world; and Greece also helped considerably by her sublime philosophy to mould the Christian theology. Originally, so closely associated as to be almost one, the thought of Greece and Rome operated upon Christianity in different directions, and with different results. In the East theological speculation was occupied chiefly with the nature of God and the Person of Christ, in the

<sup>1</sup> Merivale, *Conversion of the Roman Empire*, Lect. iv. p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> Milman, *Hist. Latin Chris-*

*tianity*, book iii. ch. v. vol. ii. p.

11; see also Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, ch. xlv. vol. v. pp. 257-327.

West it was exercised with the facts of sin and the Divine plan of salvation. While the West accepted without modification the Eastern theory of the Trinity, it worked out independently for itself its theory of the Atonement. The Eastern theory of atonement was, as we have observed, based upon the idea of redemption by ransom from the captivity of Satan, to deliver those whom he had vanquished. The Western theory was founded upon the Roman doctrine of obligation and the law of debt and penalty, and any one acquainted with the Roman system of law will have no difficulty—as Milman and Maine remind us<sup>1</sup>—in discovering how the master mind of Anselm should have defined sin as *Non aliud peccare quam Deo non redditur debitum*, and should have answered his solemn question, *Cur Deus Homo?* by formulating his theory of sufficient satisfaction for human guilt, freely provided by Christ in enduring the death which He did not deserve for any sin of His own.

Upon the elucidation of these very interesting themes we cannot enter. We have had to deal not with the development of Christian doctrine, but with the Divine preparation for Christianity. By the nature of the subject we have been limited to such scattered hints of that providential discipline as we could find along only one line of observation. In pre-Christian and non-Christian religions, when they are examined in the clear light which we now enjoy, will be found

<sup>1</sup> Maine, *Ancient Law*, 5th ed., pp. 355 seq.; Milman, *Latin Christianity*, Introduction, p. 5.

many other prophecies of the Gospel. Other beliefs than those connected with their sacrificial worship, expressed both in the mythology of the people and the philosophy of the learned, will be found reaching out after the cardinal articles of "the faith which was once delivered to the saints." What we have observed along the one line which we have tried to follow, is surely sufficient to convince us that those beliefs are not to be despised and disregarded by us, because they are expressed in what appear to be childish forms. It is only at first, for example, that we feel inclined to ridicule the Indian and Chaldean myth that the gods attained to deity, and that they created and still govern the world, by sacrifice. For under the regenerating influence of Gospel ideas the ancient myth becomes a symbol of the metaphysical truth, that the conception of creation, or of revelation, involves a voluntary limitation of Infinite Being which is of the essence of sacrifice. When we allow the wise men of Greece, of Rome, of Egypt, and of the great old East, to speak to us in their own tongue, and after their own fashion, we find that we cannot apply the word "*heathen*" to them in any offensive or contemptuous sense. The significance of the apostolic expression, "the common salvation,"<sup>1</sup> broadens and deepens its hold upon our comprehension. We find that, instead of being separated from them by an impassable gulf, "the continuity that knits us to them and makes them kindred is really unbroken, and is joined with links

<sup>1</sup> Jude v. 2.

that all bear the Great Workman's unmistakable design."<sup>1</sup>

We may be confident that this is true not only of those peoples among whom the tides of human thought rose high and pure, but also of those among whom we seem to find thought in only a feeble and turbid flow. We may believe

. . . "that in all ages  
Every human heart is human,  
That in even savage bosoms  
There are longings, yearnings, strivings  
For the good they comprehend not,  
That the feeble hands and helpless,  
Groping blindly in the darkness,  
Touch God's right hand in that darkness  
And are lifted up and strengthened."<sup>2</sup>

More than thirty years ago Professor Max Müller instructed us how distinctive of Christianity is this great truth.<sup>3</sup> He reminded us that *Humanity* is a word which we look for in vain in Aristotle or Plato; that the idea of mankind as one family, the children of God, is one of Christian growth; and consequently that the sciences of Mankind, and of Language, and of Religion without Christianity would never have sprung into life. It is to be feared that the Christian Church has not yet sufficiently realised the significance of this truth as taught by St. Paul in his sermon on Mars Hill,

<sup>1</sup> Mahaffy, *Problems in Greek History*, p. 197.

<sup>2</sup> Longfellow, Introduction to "Hiawatha."

<sup>3</sup> *Lectures on the Science of Language*, first series, p. 81 seq., p. 118 seq.

and in his letters to the Galatian and the Colossian Churches.<sup>1</sup> Yet there it stands that "God hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us. For in Him we live, and move, and have our being, as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring."<sup>2</sup> Forasmuch therefore as Jew and Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free, are the offspring of God, and forasmuch as His fatherly care does not depend upon our goodness, but upon His—for men are not less His children, not less the objects of His tenderness, that they have lost themselves through their own perversity—there devolves upon all whom He has found the imperative and blessed obligation of declaring the Gospel of Christ's Salvation to the ends of the earth. For the most ignorant and besotted of the millions who have not yet heard it—who are overwhelmed in amazement before the manifestations of nature, who worship the works of their own hands, who "mingle their devotions with cruelty, or who offer their passions to serve God"—are bone of our bone and are our brethren. God, who hath reconciled *us* to Himself through Christ, hath committed unto us *for their sakes* the word of reconciliation. To them we are ambassadors therefore on behalf

<sup>1</sup> Galatians iii. 28; Colossians iii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xvii. 26-28.

of Christ—as though God were intreating by us—that we may beseech them on behalf of Christ to be reconciled to God. For “Him who knew no sin, He made to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cp. 2 Cor. v. 18-21, Revised Version.

FINIS