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A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_bib-sacra\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php)

## ARTICLE VII.

## ORIGIN AND SIGNIFICANCE OF JEWISH SACRIFICES.

THIS Article will be devoted to a somewhat detailed account of certain theories of the Origin of Sacrifices which have been advanced at different times. The one to which attention will be first turned is that of John Spencer, as set forth in his celebrated work *De Legibus Hebraeorum*, written in Latin, and printed in 1685.

It was almost unavoidable that the long period of servitude which the Israelites passed through in Egypt should have had the effect of obliterating from their minds, to a very great extent, the knowledge of the true God, and creating an attachment to the modes of worship which were practised by their oppressors. The means which God saw fit to use to bring them back to their former purer belief were not such as might seem to us the most direct and efficient. He adopted, instead, a very circuitous method. The Israelites had been habituated while in Egypt to a mode of worship which abounded in sacrifices, and God chose, therefore, to incorporate similar observances into the Mosaic economy, lest by creating too violent a contrast between this economy and the Egyptian form of worship, the minds of the Hebrews should be filled with disgust, and should reject with abhorrence the new religion. Sacrifices neither in themselves, nor by virtue of that which they typify, are directly pleasing to the mind of God; they are tolerated merely, in condescension to human infirmity, as a necessary though disagreeable means of preventing a greater evil.

The language of Chrysostom in his sixth Homily on Matthew gives a correct statement of the true origin of sacrifices. "All the religious rites, he says, prescribed to the Jews, and especially sacrifices, had their origin in the rudeness of

paganism. God, in his care for the salvation of men, allowed such forms to be used in his own worship as had been employed in the worship of idols; those only which were of a positively sinful character being excluded. It was intended by this," Chrysostom goes on to say, "to lead men by a gradual progress to a purer and less carnal form of worship."

It will now be attempted to show that sacrifices formally considered, that is to say, as offerings to Jehovah, are to be traced, not to divine appointment, but rather to the gross modes of thinking common among pagan nations.

We quote first the language used by David in Psa. li. 16: "For thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt-offering." The reader will easily recall Paul's allusion to this passage in the tenth of Hebrews. The words of Theophylact, commenting on this passage, are very pertinent: "Does any one inquire," he asks, "whether the sacrifices enjoined in the Levitical law were agreeable to the will of God? They were so unquestionably; but, then, it must be considered that the will of God has a twofold aspect, direct and indirect, as the will of direct purpose and the will of allowance. In affirming, therefore, the agreeableness of sacrifices to the will of God, reference is had to the will of allowance. The Hebrews were seen to be strongly disposed to the worship of idols in the use of sacrificial rites, and God allowed them therefore to sacrifice to himself, lest, if they were forbidden to do so, they should sacrifice to idols." The introduction of sacrifices into the Mosaic economy cannot be accounted for otherwise.

We quote also Isa. i. 11, 12, in which passage God is represented as saying to the Jews: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me; I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts?" etc. The obvious import of these words is that God has no direct pleasure in sacrifices, and never directly enjoined them, but merely permitted their use. It is admitted that a different view is sometimes taken of Isaiah's words. The Israelites,

it is said, were inclined to believe that altars laden with sacrifices, and the odor of incense ascending to heaven were in themselves, and apart from their significance, and from the mental state of the worshipper which they represented, pleasing to Jehovah. The passage before us was designed to correct this very crude notion. But, it should be carefully noted, not that sacrifices were offered by the Jews hypocritically, but that absolutely they were not commanded by Jehovah; not that God positively disapproved of them, but merely that he did not positively require them.

It may, perhaps, be asked here, why, if God did not have direct pleasure in sacrifices, Moses should so earnestly require them, and preface his requirement, in so many cases, by the formula: "Thus saith the Lord"? Why did David, when near the close of life, enjoin on his successor so careful an observance of these ordinances as they were written in the law of Moses? And why did the Jewish nation adhere to this law, on the whole, with so much constancy? One answer to these questions is, that many of the passages in which sacrifices are thought to be required are couched in the language of permission, rather than of command. Thus it is said, in Lev. i. 2: "*If* any man of you bring an offering unto the Lord, ye shall bring an offering of your cattle." By this language may be meant, not that Jehovah directly enjoins sacrifices, but merely that, if it is in one's mind to offer a sacrifice, it should be done spontaneously, cheerfully. Another answer to these questions is, that many of the commands relative to sacrifices refer rather to the Being to whom they are to be presented than to the sacrifices themselves. Let every one who wishes to sacrifice be careful and sacrifice to Jehovah, and not to any false god. The words addressed by the angel to Manoah may be regarded as a commentary on these passages. "Though thou detain me," the angel says, "I will not eat of thy bread, and if thou wilt offer a burnt-offering, thou must offer it unto the Lord," — if the sacrifice must be presented, let it be presented to the only proper object of religious homage. Still another an-

swer is, that none of these commands were given until the people had already offered sacrifice to the golden calf. They betrayed in that act such an unconquerable fondness for this form of worship, that the necessity of yielding to it, in some measure, may be said to have now become apparent to the mind of God; and, as this fondness had nothing in it which was intrinsically wicked, it was indulged, lest, if repressed too violently, it should break out in some more odious form. God uttered these commands, not spontaneously, but, if such language may be allowed, from compulsion; they were extorted, rather than freely given. Sacrifices were allowed observances, rather than manifestations of obedience to a direct command. Thus Chrysostom affirms that God is not to be conceived as requiring sacrifices of his own accord, from direct preference, but out of indulgence to the people.

A third passage, which may be used in support of our main proposition occurs in Amos v. 25, 26: "Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? But ye have borne the tabernacles of your god Moloch and Chiun," etc. A certain class of interpreters, with a view of elucidating this somewhat difficult passage, have maintained that the Israelites did not offer sacrifices to Jehovah at all so long as they were in the desert—that they were relieved not only of the yoke of circumcision, but of sacrifices. This opinion, however, is open to very serious objection, on this, if on no other ground, that the Israelites sought permission to go into the wilderness for the very purpose of offering sacrifices. Other interpreters maintain that the words of Amos imply only that the Israelites sacrificed, while in the desert, sparingly; or that, in as much as during their wanderings they were strongly inclined to idolatry, God regarded their sacrifices less as acts of homage to himself than of veneration to false gods, thereby denying to them the character of sacrifices. These interpretations are manifestly forced and inadequate. The passage expressly denies that during the wanderings of

the Israelites in the wilderness any sacrifices had been offered to Jehovah. In what sense, now, are we to understand this denial? The most satisfactory explanation is this: God is not to be understood as denying that the Israelites while in the desert offered sacrifices, but as affirming that he had not required any such form of worship, on his own account. We are to emphasize the phrase, "to me." "You suppose," he would be understood as saying, "that in sacrificing you do what is extremely pleasing to me; you deceive yourselves. Did you not, while in the desert, worship the calf—sacrifice to Moloch and to Chiun? To hinder you, now, from going to greater lengths in idolatry, I directed that a tabernacle should be erected, and sacrifices be offered to me at its door. In reality, therefore, you sacrificed to your own passions, rather than to me. You contracted moral disease, while in Egypt, of such a nature that it could be healed in no other way than by a continuance of the same practice by which it had been produced at first." The explanation now given is by no means novel. It is in harmony with the opinion of the Fathers. The people, it is the remark of Epiphanius, sacrificed, not because God would be pleased with the act, but because such an inveterate habit of sacrificing had been acquired in Egypt, and Jehovah, by temporary indulgence, would allure them away from idolatrous worship. Tertullian and Justin Martyr speak, with equal plainness, to the same effect.

If the interpretation now suggested seems subtle and refined, let it be remembered that similar forms of expression are not unusual in the Bible. It is said, for instance, in Isa. xliii. 23: "Neither hast thou honored me with thy sacrifices," as if reproaching the people for not presenting sacrifices; while in other parts of the same prophecy they are blamed for the multitude of their offerings. Yet the prophet is by no means inconsistent with himself. The people are blamed for persisting in a practice in itself by no means grateful to Jehovah, though it was permitted on account of the hardness of their hearts. In a similar sense

we are to understand the words of Zechariah (vii. 5, 6): "When ye fasted and mourned, did ye at all fast even to me? And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?"

The theory which we now represent, relative to the origin of sacrifices, is less in harmony with the opinions of modern writers than with those of the Fathers. Justin Martyr, for instance, in the Dialogue with Trypho, wards off the reproach cast upon Christians that they abstained from offering sacrifices, by saying that God, out of condescension to the weakness of the people, permitted sacrifices to be offered to himself, lest otherwise they should be offered to idols. The language of Theodoret is of the same import. The long residence of the people in Egypt, he says, had familiarized them to the custom of offering sacrifices to gods and demons, and so God allowed the rite to be incorporated in the Mosaic economy, only making careful provision that no unclean animals should be used, and that sacrifices should be offered only to himself. Citations to the same effect might easily be multiplied, from Cyril of Alexandria, Irenaeus, Jerome, Procopius, and Eusebius.

Jewish writers concur with the Fathers. "At the time of Moses," says Maimonides, "it was the almost universal custom to offer sacrifices in the temples which contained the images of the gods, to fall down before these images, and offer incense. Now, to have instituted a religious economy from which all sacrificial rites were excluded, would not have been in harmony with the wisdom of God, as it would have disgusted men always reluctant to abandon a habit to which they have been long accustomed." So Trypho, the Jew, is represented as asking whether God enjoined sacrifices on account of his own poverty or the delight he felt in the rite, or because of the hardness of heart of our fathers, and their proneness to idolatry? Plainly on the latter account.

Certain modern writers have expressed themselves in a similar way; none, perhaps, more explicitly than Petavius.

“Sacrifices were enjoined,” he says, “not as being in themselves grateful to Jehovah, but out of compassion to the infirmity of human nature; on the same principle that medicines are prescribed, not because they are in themselves desirable, but on account of their efficacy in the cure of diseases.”

There are certain considerations which Spencer and his followers derive from the nature of the case, in favor of their theory respecting the origin of sacrifices.

We may insist, in the first place, on the time at which the Levitical law was given. This consideration has already been adverted to. Ancient writers have laid much stress on the fact that this law was not given until after sacrifice had been offered to the golden calf—an act which betrayed so deep-seated an attachment to sacrificial observances. “Previously to this date,” it is the assertion of Chrysostom, “the name of sacrifices is not found, but living precepts and living words; not sacrifices, but miracles and signs.” “Before the sin of the golden calf,” says Jerome, “the Israelites heard only the decalogue; but after that act they received the many precepts of the ceremonial law, directing them to offer to Jehovah the sacrifices which it was now evident they would offer to some divinities at all hazards.” No further testimonies from uninspired writers need be given, because we have an express assertion of the scriptures, in Jer. vii. 22: “I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices.” Relying on this text, it was the opinion of the Fathers that God gave to the Israelites no laws concerning sacrifices, till the making of the golden calf, and not even then for any other reason than that they would otherwise render to idols the homage which was due only to Jehovah.

It may be remarked, again, that the scriptures, not less than reason, suggest that sacrifices cannot, in themselves, be grateful to Jehovah. The presenting of our bodies unto God, indeed, Paul assures us, is a sacrifice acceptable to



him, because it is a *reasonable* service. And Peter speaks of the duty of offering up spiritual sacrifices acceptable unto God through Jesus Christ; but these are living, spiritual sacrifices, such as correspond to the spirituality of the divine nature. On the other hand, God often and plainly insinuates that he does not wish brute beasts to be presented to him in sacrifice. Such sacrifices give him no pleasure, because there is nothing in them which suits with his own spiritual nature. "I will take," he says, "no bullock out of thy home, nor he-goat out of thy fold." "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?" It is given, in the scriptures, as a proof of the stupidity of the Hebrews, that they ventured to imagine God stood in need of sacrifices. God can receive no delight from any such source. Reason inculcates this doctrine not less forcibly than the Bible. The ancient heathen poets, the philosophers, Pythagoras, Plato, Porphyry, have given utterance, in the language they use on this subject, to the voice of reason. They wonder as to whence the custom of defiling all altars with the blood of sacrificed victims could have originated.

Still further. The multiplicity of sacrifices and rites joined with them, is explained most satisfactorily on the theory now advocated. Some very weighty reason must have existed for such an endless variety. No reason can be suggested, however, so conclusive as this — that at the time of Moses a multiplicity of sacrificial observances everywhere prevailed, and that God assimilated his own ritual to this peculiarity of the age; doing so at the prompting of compassion to human infirmity. No sooner had the custom of honoring the Divinity by means of sacrifices become prevalent, there being no rule beyond an innate sense of propriety by which to regulate the kinds of sacrifice and the rites which should accompany them, and to restrain the wayward fancies of men, than superstition at once gained such power that men in one region sacrificed either none or a very few animals, and with no rites beyond those of the

very simplest character, while in another country they ran into the wildest excesses. If, therefore, sacrifices must be incorporated in all religious worship, it is easy to see how God would be prompted to command a variety of sacrifices and a great diversity of rites, so as to humor men's innate fondness for change and novelty. Especially did he provide that sacrifices should be performed with such a degree of pomp and splendor as to gratify the popular taste. We may quote here, as not inapplicable to the argument, a sentence from Calvin on the Pentateuch: "There is no question," he says, "but that the custom of sacrificing is to be traced up to the holy patriarchs; but from the time at which the whole world turned aside to superstition the attendant rites degenerated in their character; every person contriving some new, and not unfrequently exceptionable, rite. God benevolently allowed these different forms to be observed, even by his chosen people, provided only it could be done innocently and carefully." This master of Israel here unequivocally owns that many sacrificial observances had been transferred from Paganism to Judaism. Only on this supposition could the very obvious resemblance of the one system to the other be explained. The pagans did not borrow their rites from the Jews; but the Jews borrowed theirs from the pagans. The sum of the argument, then, is this: God allowed himself to be worshipped with these multifarious observances, many of which had been used by idolaters, partly that the Jews might be attracted to his worship by the same pleasing variety which adorned the pagan worship, and partly that by thus seeing every variety of observance introduced into their ritual, no pretext should be left for the adoration of idols.

It is maintained now by a numerous class of writers, as in harmony alike with the scriptures and with the nature of the case, that God ordained sacrifices, not because they had previously existed among pagan nations, but that they should serve as types of Christ and of the mysteries of the gospel; that men might discern in them an emblematic representation of the sacrifice of Christ. Men were not prepared for the

direct view of this sacrifice ; it could be looked at best through the semi-transparent veil of types. This objection admits of a threefold answer.

It is incredible that God should have appointed sacrifices so diverse as to matter and form with a view to merely a typical representation of the death of Christ. The judgment given by Abarbanel seems much more in harmony with the truth. "We ought not," he says "to suppose all sacrifices to have the same end in view, and to be significant of the same moral truth."

We do not deny, again, that sacrifices may have been partly designed to illustrate the mysteries of the gospel. This purpose is by no means incompatible with what we conceive to have been their main purpose — the prevention of idolatry. No ancient writer asserts more positively than Justin Martyr, for example, that God ordained sacrifices out of regard to prevailing custom and the humor of the people ; and yet the same writer maintains that sacrifices were prescribed as types and emblems of Christ. Indeed the wisdom of God is illustrated in the fact, that sacrificial rites were meant to serve not only a legal but an evangelical purpose.

Yet again, it may be conceded that such sacrifices as were required to be performed with peculiar and emphatic rites may have been meant to embody some mystery, either ethical or evangelical. This may be conceded especially in respect to such varieties of sacrifice as were most at variance with the usages of other nations

It is also objected that the scriptures in very plain and emphatic terms not only permit but command sacrificial observances, and although in some, and especially the prophetic portions, God may declare that he places no value on sacrifices, and did not command them to be offered, these declarations are not to be understood as if sacrifices were not grateful to the Almighty, and did not proceed from a divine command, but, on the contrary, were designed merely to reprove the erroneous conceptions which the Jews entertained of the

nature of the command, oftentimes seeming to consider the substance of religion as identical with an outward and formal obedience. The existence of commands relative to sacrifices is readily conceded; but God may very properly be said to have given these commands, lest the Hebrews, bound by no external forms, should give to Satan that species of homage which they were forbidden by their own law from rendering to any other being than Jehovah, but which they were so strongly inclined to render at all hazards. But no sooner had the nation advanced somewhat in culture than they became able to hear God speaking more plainly in regard to sacrifices, and affirming that he placed no value on them, and had hitherto allowed their use only on account of the hardness of men's hearts.

It is objected that the patriarchs offered sacrifices before the epoch of Moses and, for all that appears, at the impulse of a true and rational piety. This objection has no small force. Its force may be broken, however, by remembering that the violent propensity which the Israelites betrayed at the time of Moses to worship under the form of sacrifices was obviously the effect of long contact with the Egyptians, rather than a relic of that primitive piety which displayed itself in the patriarchal sacrifices. The former, as has often been said, at the time of Moses cherished a superstitious attachment to sacrificial observances, and were inclined to practise them in a manner wholly abhorrent to the mind of Jehovah. It was to correct this rising tendency, and bring back the people, by means the most likely to be successful, to a spiritual worship, that the Levitical law was instituted.

The objection is also put forth sometimes that God is represented as smelling a sweet savor when sacrifices were offered to him, meaning thereby to express the pleasure which he had in them. God cannot, however, be thought to have had pleasure in sacrifices except as honest though mistaken manifestations of reverence and love for himself. That this pleasure is slight, appears from the very narrow limits within which God confined this species of worship. He would have

it rendered only in one place and at certain definite times, and in the use of certain prescribed victims, and with accompanying rites, which were all very carefully defined. We may well believe that these limitations would have been spared had sacrifices been intrinsically pleasing to Jehovah.

If we turn, now, and contemplate sacrifices in relation to the materials of which they were composed, we shall discern additional arguments in favor of the theory which we now present.

The material of sacrifices comprised three classes of animals — oxen, sheep, and goats. Three motives are thought to have led to this choice. First, it is probable that, before the time of Moses, these classes of animals were the ones principally used by other nations in sacrifices. Sometimes, indeed, though only occasionally, a larger liberty may have been enjoyed; but God restricted the Jews to these three classes, out of regard to this benevolent usage. Then, again, these animals may be supposed to have been used by the patriarchs on the ground of their superior value. They were, besides, best fitted, on various accounts, for sacrificial purposes. They were, emphatically, clean beasts. They were used as food; and, as eating at the same table and of the same article is always esteemed a symbol of friendship, it was fitting that in sacrifices, a symbol of friendship between God and man, such animals as were commonly used for food should be employed.

Certain inanimate objects, also, were used in sacrifices; and as the Jews used a smaller number of animals for sacrificial purposes than the pagans, they also used a smaller number of inanimate objects. The most common articles thus used were bread, wine, and salt. There are satisfactory reasons for the belief that the use of these articles by the Hebrews was derived from pagans. Especially is this true of bread. God may be supposed to have allowed every kind of bread in common use to be employed in sacrifices. This permission was given to gratify the not unnatural wish of the people for as close a similarity as possible between their

religious usages and those of surrounding nations. The opinion, again, is not an improbable one, that Noah used bread in sacrifices, and that from him the custom spread itself among all his descendants. This would easily account for the existence of the custom among the Jews. Furthermore, it has already been argued that the habit of offering animals in sacrifice existed among pagan nations before the age of Moses, and that it furnished a reason for a similar practice among the Jews. So bread was used by pagan nations, in connection with animals, and the same reason which justified the use of the animals would justify the use of the bread. The fruits of the earth have as much to do with the comfort of life, and men are under equal obligations to the benignity of heaven on account of them, as in the case of animals. Reason, therefore, dictates the use of bread in sacrifices, as much as the use of animals.

Is it objected, here, that, as the custom of using bread in sacrifice was founded on tradition from the time of Noah, it is wrong to ascribe the custom of sacrifice in general to rude and ignorant pagans? It has not been meant to imply that every sacrificial rite afterward sanctioned by the Levitical law, was deduced from paganism, nor that any rites were introduced without first passing under the amending hand of God. On the contrary, of the sacrificial rites prescribed by Moses, some had already been practised by the ante-Mosaic fathers, some by pagan nations, and all were in harmony with the rudeness and simplicity of a primitive period, and were allowed to be practised among the Jews only on this account, and as preparatory to a more spiritual worship.

The use of wine was evidently an outgrowth of pagan custom. As we have seen, it was made somewhat prominent in the Mosaic ritual. As there is an analogy between a sacrifice and a feast, it was ordained that, as meat and bread were present in sacrifices, wine also should be furnished, as being a usual accompaniment of a feast. Two reasons may be suggested in reference to the use of wine in Jewish sacri-

fices: one, that the use of wine was common with the patriarchs; the other, that God was willing to allow as complete a likeness as possible between Jewish and pagan religious ceremonies. The tendency to a hurtful religious superstition can sometimes be best cured by temporary indulgence. Human nature must not be subjected to too violent remedial agencies. Indulgence may be vouchsafed to certain native propensities, care only being taken that indulgence does not run to a sinful excess. This principle was observed in reference to the use of wine. All objectionable features belonging to its use among pagans were first carefully removed. For example, the pagans were in the habit of distributing the wine among the worshippers. This was not allowed to be done by the Jews. Wine was not used by the pagans in sacrifices to certain gods; not to Ceres, for instance, because Ceres had nothing to do with the vine. No such restriction could exist in the Jewish ritual; for God was the Creator of all the fruits of the earth. With the pagans mixed wine was allowed; but none except pure wine was lawful in Jewish sacrifices.

The pagans, then, in the ante-Mosaic period, used wine in sacrifice. As they looked upon Mars as the dispenser of martial virtue, on Minerva as the dispenser of wisdom, and Ceres of corn, they offered to each of these deities sacrifices correspondent to their respective characters. They offered wine to the god who presided over the vintage. To Jehovah, therefore, as the sole Creator of all things, and the Dispenser of all good, wine, among other things, should be offered in sacrifice. That salt was used in heathen sacrifices, no one questions. No sacrifice, says Pliny, can be considered as complete without the addition of a salted cake. The reader will easily recall allusions to salted cakes in connection with sacrifices in the *Aeneid* of Virgil. There can be no difficulty, then, in deriving the custom of using salt from paganism.

We are next to consider sacrifices in relation to the purposes meant to be answered by them, with a view to deriving thence an argument in support of our theory. Sacrifices

are conceived by some writers to be merely the sanction of a covenant or league of friendship; by others, as a rite properly accompanying prayer; by others, again, as a propitiation; and by others, as a mere form of adoration. They ought rather to be regarded in the light of gifts, which, in an age of primeval simplicity, were brought to the Divinity, to operate on his mind as they are wont to operate on the mind of men. These gifts were viewed as tokens of allegiance and subjection, or as means of appeasing the anger and gaining the favor of the sovereign, or to indicate gratitude. Sacrifices were employed for similar purposes in the worship of Jehovah. They bore different names, as one or another of these different purposes was designed to be answered by them. Thus there came to be sin-offerings and trespass-offerings, burnt-offerings, and thank-offerings.

Sacrifices of this varying character were in use among the heathen, and were transferred from heathen to Jewish worship.

In support of this general statement, we ask attention to three considerations. In the first place, Moses speaks concerning sacrifices in their various forms as if well-known and in general use. He prescribes with minuteness the rites and ceremonies which ought to be used in sacrifices, and the materials which were proper to be used; while in regard to the purpose to which they were meant to be subservient he is more silent, as if it were a matter already well understood. Rites and ceremonies might vary at different times and places, and would therefore need, in a given case, to be stated with particularity. The meaning, the purpose, of sacrifices, on the contrary, is constant and invariable, known to every one—known to the Jews, because sacrifices with these ends in view had been, even before the time of Moses, in almost universal use. The purpose, the object, of sacrifices could not be lost sight of; modes and rites might be; and, therefore, the Mosaic ritual abounded in directions with respect to these, and was silent in regard to the former, just as would naturally be the case on the supposition of the truth of our general statement.



In the next place, we remark that the sacrifices presented by the patriarchs, before the age of Moses, are spoken of as having been spontaneous offerings. Abel's sacrifice is styled in the Epistle to the Hebrews a gift. Similar phraseology is employed at times subsequent to the Exodus. Moses uses the term "Corban," or gift,—the word afterwards employed by the Saviour in Mark vii. 11,—as the title of a certain class of sacrifices. It is worth while to take notice that Plato viewed the act of sacrificing as of the same nature with that of presenting gifts to the Divinity; as therefore sacrifices were regarded in the light of gifts, and as these gifts might be brought with very different objects in view, sometimes to appease the divine anger, at others as a token of gratitude, we should expect to find in the Mosaic ritual just such a division of sacrifices into various classes as actually appears, on the supposition of the truth of our general proposition, that they were transferred from pagan to Jewish worship.

We know, in the third place, that sacrifices were thus classified anterior to the time of Moses. Cain and Abel brought thank-offerings. Eliphaz presented sacrifices of a propitiatory character. Abraham offered what may be termed covenant sacrifices. All this is in keeping with the truth of the proposition we are now attempting to establish. We are led to form a similar judgment by viewing sacrifices somewhat more minutely in reference to their different varieties. Those of a peculiar character, there is good ground for believing, were in use before the period of Moses. Noah seems to have presented offerings of this nature. Noah, it is affirmed, built an altar, and God smelled a sweet savor, "a savor of rest," as if he had before been angry, and was now reconciled. Job and Eliphaz, as before stated, presented offerings with the same end in view.

To the more unsophisticated minds of men, at a period previous to that of Moses, it was apparent that the anger of God, not less than that of men, could be appeased by means of gifts. The ease with which the anger of men, even when it is most intense, can be allayed by means of gifts, is such

that it has passed into a proverb: "A gift in secret pacifieth anger." It was a common opinion alike with Hebrews and pagans that the anger of God as well as that of men could be thus pacified. The former loaded the altars of God with gifts, even at times when they were most inclined to violate his law. The heathen poets, Homer for example, in the same spirit represent it as easy to mollify the anger, to turn the will of the gods by means of incense and vows and libations. The Philistines are represented as supposing the anger of Jehovah capable of being allayed by means of golden gifts, and that punishment could thus be averted from offenders. Sacrifices, again, appear to have been considered as of the nature of prayers. Viewed in this light they were in use both among the Hebrews and pagans. Abraham and Isaac built altars, we are told, and called upon the name of the Lord; as if the one act would have been altogether incomplete and meaningless unless accompanied by the other.

It was wholly in harmony with the simplicity of a primitive age to imagine that gifts would procure favors of any description and to any extent from the Divinity. Men seem to have fancied it to be right to conduct a series of bargainings with God. For this reason they offered prayer in the form and by the use of gifts. And it is not difficult to see how the prevalence of this sentiment in the minds of men should have led to the incorporation of sacrifices into the Mosaic worship. Nor need we wonder at the absence of any specific command in the Mosaic law to accompany sacrifices with prayer. The propriety, the necessity, of this would be so readily recognized, that such commands would be wholly superfluous. What we have now said is strengthened by the fact that sacrifices of a *precatory* character are known to have been customary among pagans at a period so early as to give color to the belief that the usage was derived from them by Moses.

Peace-offerings are not infrequently alluded to by heathen writers, in such terms as to indicate that they were a customary element in worship. Their general prevalence, in-

deed, scarcely admits of a question. Moses makes allusion to them in Lev. iii. 1 without any prefatory remark, which would scarcely have been the case had they been a novelty. Jethro, at a date previous to the giving of the law, is represented as presenting burnt-offerings, and as entertaining Aaron and all the elders of Israel after the fashion of a peace-offering.

We find early traces, also, of the use of votive-offerings. These were sacrifices presented in fulfilment of a promise which had been made to the Almighty, with the view either of obtaining some special favor or of averting an apprehended calamity. The Mosaic law refers to sacrifices of this nature without preface, as if already well known and generally practised. Eliphaz also (Job xxii. 27) speaks of such votive-offerings, as if they were, even in his day, a prevalent rite, and deserved to be regarded as an institution of peculiar sanctity.

We thus see that all the classes of sacrifices were known and practised at a period before the giving of the law at Sinai, and among pagan nations as well as among the descendants of Abraham. This is a phenomenon which is best explained in accordance with the theory that sacrifices were transferred from the realm of paganism into the Mosaic worship. It certainly does away with what would be a very formidable objection to the theory now under discussion.

We now come to another argument in favor of the Spencerian theory of sacrifices, deduced from a consideration of the principle and origin of *patriarchal sacrifices*. It is admitted by all that the first fathers of the race offered sacrifices. Such we know to have been the case with Cain and Abel—in this respect, no doubt, treading in the footsteps of Adam—as well as with Abraham and Noah. It is argued, now, that men of such a character as these, actuated by such reverential views of God, would not have ventured on the practice of this rite without a direct divine command. They would have waited for a distinct announcement from Jehovah that this mode of worship would please

him. The writers who urge this argument insist, that the law of sacrifice was not merely *sanctioned* by Moses, but rather that being an old rule, it was renewed and confirmed by him; and that sacrifices, instead of being merely permitted as a usage already prevalent, and in condescension to the rudeness of an unlettered people, were directly ordained by Jehovah, and all this for reasons which, though perhaps sometimes obscure, were yet important.

In opposition, now, to this mode of reasoning, it is maintained that the patriarchs offered sacrifices at the mere prompting of their own religious feeling, and without an explicit divine injunction. In favor of this assertion, however, only probable arguments can be alleged.

The first argument is drawn from those passages in which, for the purpose of lessening the excessive value which the Israelites were inclined to place on sacrifices, God denies that he had ever enjoined on the forefathers of the race their performance. In the first chapter of Isaiah and in the seventh of Jeremiah it is explicitly asserted that Jehovah never desired sacrificial victims at the hands of the people, and had given no commands concerning burnt-offerings in the day when he led the people forth out of the land of Egypt. Why should God have thus asserted that he gave no commands to the Israelites concerning sacrifices at the date of the Exodus, if he had already, at a period long before this event, instituted the rite of sacrifice? Who would judge a law given to Adam and his immediate descendants concerning modes of worship to be of weight so inferior to those given to the Hebrews during their march to Palestine as to be undeserving of mention?

It is to be noted, in the second place, that Cain and Abel offered sacrifices of a nature corresponding to the difference in their pursuits and resources. Cain as a husbandman offered to the Lord of the fruits of the earth, and Abel of the firstlings of the flock. But this circumstance gives room for the conjecture that their offerings were nothing but a spontaneous testimony, on their part, of gratitude to God, who

had given them success in their different labors. They seem, as the fruit of their own private reasoning, to have judged that a portion of that which they had received from God should be returned to him as a thank-offering. There is in short no proof, that in these offerings they conceived themselves to be obeying a divine command.

It should not be forgotten, in the next place, that in the New Testament God has established no positive institutions nor rites of worship, except the two sacraments. He seems to have left the regulation of the outward forms of worship to the church, in the idea that different forms would be required in order to suit the varying exigencies of different times and places. Nor in the old Testament do we discover any regulations in respect to external worship, until the superstition and the rudeness of the people required such regulation as a necessary check to the disposition to run to a criminal excess in this matter. It would seem, therefore, most fitting to suppose that Jehovah left the rites of worship during the patriarchal age to be fixed by the innate sense of men as to what was becoming. In the simpler and purer states of society men sought no other guidance than the dictates of sound reason in regard to spiritual worship. Why should a different rule have been though needful in regard to merely ceremonial worship?

In fine, it may be positively asserted that not the faintest trace of any law, given to the earliest fathers of the race, to worship God in the use of sacrifice can be anywhere found in the scriptures; and it is altogether inconceivable that had such a law been set forth this silence would have been maintained in regard to it, as if it were a matter of no moment. It is worth while to notice, also, that the opinion now maintained is supported by a very general authority: "The ancient patriarchs," writes the author of the Apostolical Constitutions, "animated by the love of God, offered sacrifices, not because they had been formally commanded to do so, but at the prompting of a certain native instinct, spontaneously, from a grateful sense of the divine benignity."

Justin Martyr lays down a similar judgment. "No one of those," he declares, "who before the Sinaitic law offered sacrifices, did so by the command of God, though even then he accepted the offering, and by that means indicated his approval of the conduct of the worshipper."

The sum of the matter, then, is this, that the ancient fathers of the race, not out of obedience to any positive law or direct divine suggestion, but altogether of their own accord, under the guidance of their own reason, offered sacrifices, conceiving that by presenting to Jehovah a portion of their most valued possessions, they best exhibited their veneration and love for him.

We turn now to a consideration of the objections which have been sometimes urged against the views just advanced.

The affirmation in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that by faith Abel offered unto God a sacrifice more acceptable than that of Cain, is relied upon as containing a forcible objection. A faith which deserves to be called divine, it is said, is distinguished from superstition in this, — that the former rests on a declaration or promise made by Jehovah, while the latter is based on the doctrines and precepts of men. Reason, therefore, teaches that we ought to suppose Abel to have cherished a divine faith on the occasion of his sacrifice — a faith in a divine injunction to present such an offering as he did. The faith of Abel, now, which made his offering worthy of being styled a more excellent sacrifice, was a persuasion, deeply fixed in his mind, of the favor which God bears to all truly pious dispositions, and the certainty of a most ample recompence — a persuasion such as prompted him to form his life by the rules of piety, and to consecrate not only his property, but himself, to the service of Jehovah. The acceptableness of his sacrifice, which in the Epistle to the Hebrews is ascribed to his faith, God in the Old Testament, and John in the New, ascribe to the holiness of his life, that is, to a faith whose genuineness was demonstrated by correspondent works. If we define the faith said to have been cherished by Abel as a belief in a divine command relative

to sacrifice, it is difficult to see why such a faith on his part should have given to his sacrifice an acceptableness greater than that of Cain, since, for aught that appears, it was a similar faith which induced the latter to bring his offering. What was the ground of the distinction between the two sacrifices? Or did Cain deserve to be stigmatized as an evil-minded man, because he did spontaneously what Abel did in obedience to a specific divine direction? The fallacy involved in this objection will be apparent to one who observes that Abel's sacrifice is denominated, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, a gift, and not the payment of a debt. It was prompted by his pious disposition, rather than by a desire to render obedience to a specific law.

It is asserted, again, that the patriarchal sacrifices proceeded not only from a disinterested anxiety to render to God an acceptable worship, but also from the hope of a future recompence. We are told, for instance, that as soon as Cain perceived that God had no respect for his offering, and that he must consequently abandon his hope of reward, his countenance fell. But how, it is asked, could these ancient patriarchs have persuaded themselves that the offering of brute beasts as a sacrifice to Jehovah would insure a reward to the worshipper, unless the law of sacrifice had been directly promulgated from above, unless it had been explicitly announced that such sacrifices were required, and would be accepted?

This objection seems to be rash and unadvised. While the early patriarchs retained in grateful recollection the kindnesses they had received from God, nor could conceive of any better token of their gratitude than the consecration to him of some portion of the good things which had been given them, it was in harmony with their imperfect views to testify their sense of the goodness of God in this form, and what they knew of the divine clemency in general prompted the hope that he would graciously receive the gifts which they brought in token of their thankfulness. These suggestions may be relied on with the more confidence, because

other servants of God are referred to in the scriptures who, in testimony of their gratitude, thus brought offerings to the Almighty; the offerings being accepted, even though they had not been commanded.

Another objection is founded on the condemnation pronounced by Paul, in the Epistle to the Colossians (ii. 23), on all will-worship — worship originating in the choice and contrivance of men, rather than in a law of God. If the patriarchs, it is argued, brought sacrifices merely of their own accord, and at the mere dictation of a heart burning with pious affection, they must be owned to have fallen into this sin of will-worship, and, by their pernicious, though otherwise holy, example, to have done much to corrupt their posterity. Let us carefully estimate the force of this objection. It would seem that the apostle, in the Epistle to the Colossians, could hardly have meant to use the term “will-worship” in a bad sense. Grotius affirms “that Paul could not have designed to condemn all will-worship; for in so doing he would have condemned the sacrifice of Abel.” Indeed, if all will-worship is to be blamed, we must blame, not Abel only, but the whole generation of sons of God; for it is manifest, from many instances, that the Jewish church worshipped God in an acceptable manner in the use of not a few rites that rested on no explicit command from heaven, but merely on the human will. The same affirmation may be made of the Christian church. It may, in short, be safely asserted that the term “will-worship” does not necessarily denote the worship which originates in the human will, but that which is hypocritical, schismatical.

It is objected, furthermore, that, previously to the Sinaitic law, sacrifices were offered not only out of a grateful sense of the goodness of God, but as an atonement for sin. The sacrifices of Abel and Noah, those offered for the three friends of Job, were of a propitiatory character. But, inasmuch as it depends exclusively on the good pleasure of God whether or not the sins of men shall in any case be remitted, it is to be supposed that the only conditions on which pardon



is granted would be such as Jehovah appoints, and, consequently, if the substitution of a sacrificed beast becomes such a condition, the inference must be that Jehovah commanded such a substitution.

It must be allowed that this objection has much weight. Still, it is not unanswerable. This, certainly, may be affirmed without hesitation, that peace-offerings, that is, offerings presented in token of gratitude or as a mere act of adoration, had their origin in the dictates of natural reason. Nor can it be denied that in times anterior to the Sinaitic law men presented expiatory offerings, as they would bring gifts to an offended sovereign, in order to avert from themselves his indignation. It may be said, indeed, that the unaided eye of reason could hardly be expected to perceive that God would for any reason forgive transgression, and still less that he would regard the death of a beast as a proper equivalent for the punishment of an offender. An express revelation is needed to inform us of this fact. May it not, therefore, be that originally men presented slain victims under the influence of a certain childlike faith, not as being thoroughly persuaded that such sacrifices would be efficacious, but actuated by a cheerful hope that a merciful God, out of respect to their gifts, offered as they were with truly pious motives, would pardon their iniquity, and restore to them his favor? That such would be the case may be presumed the more confidently, because the heathen, having no other ground on which to rest than a mere instinctive sentiment, seem to have believed, oftentimes, that gifts would have such an influence with God as they were known to have with men.

“*Munera, crede mihi placant hominesque deos.*”

Again, it is said to be irrational, and therefore incredible, that the patriarchs, unless explicitly instructed to that effect by the Almighty, could ever have conjectured they would do what was pleasing to him by worshipping in the use of sacrifices. There is nothing in such a form of worship

which, antecedently to a divine revelation, would be believed to be grateful to Jehovah, or in harmony with his nature.

It may, indeed, be apparent to a mind even but slightly informed as to the nature of God, that there is nothing in a sacrifice, considered in itself merely, that could be supposed to be of value in the divine estimation. Yet when the sacrifice is viewed in connection with the religious sentiment which prompts it, the matter assumes an altogether different aspect. The patriarchs, therefore, on the strength of their inborn conviction of the mercy of God, might easily persuade themselves that he would regard with benignity an expiatory sacrifice prompted by such a conviction.

It is argued, yet again, that those cases in which fire was caused to descend from heaven in order to burn the victim on the altar, should be regarded as evidence that the offering was acceptable to Jehovah, which could not have been, unless sacrifices were directly commanded. The descent of fire from heaven may be looked upon as equivalent to the utterance of such a command.

It may, indeed, be conceded that in the time of the patriarchs God may have occasionally intimated, by means of some palpable sign, that sacrifice was not an offensive rite; and yet, at the same time, there may not have been any recognition of the service as an act of obedience to a specific command. It may have been regarded merely as a manifestation of pious sentiment on the part of the patriarchs, of a heart inflamed with genuine love to the Creator. Fire may have thus been sometimes sent down from heaven in order to consume the sacrifice, that by this means the confidence of men in the goodness of God and in his faithfulness to his word might be confirmed.

The universality of the custom of sacrifice is, it is said, wholly inexplicable except on the supposition that this rite is in accordance with an explicit command.

The universality of this custom may, however, be accounted for without resorting to such an argument. The fathers of the human race, struck, as they must have been,

with the palpable tokens of the majesty of God everywhere perceptible, and convinced, as they were, that they ought to ascribe every good thing which they enjoyed to the divine beneficence, would very naturally be solicitous to find some mode of manifesting their sense of these things. As has already been intimated more than once, they would have been likely to judge no mode of doing this more suitable than to give back to the Almighty some portion of what he had bestowed upon them. For this reason, Abel, leading a pastoral life, and Cain, a tiller of the ground, brought, respectively, as offerings, the firstlings of the flock and the fruits of the earth. The sending down of fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice proved that sacrifices flowing from such a disposition were not displeasing to Jehovah. It emboldened men to obey the suggestions of a grateful and reverential spirit in offering sacrifices to Jehovah, even though he refrained from the utterance of any command on the subject.

The distinction between clean and unclean animals merits attention in this argument. This distinction was recognized even as early as the time of Noah. It was, as it would seem, an arbitrary distinction to some extent. We can but obscurely discern the ground of it in the nature of the animals to which it applied. It seems to have amounted to but little more than this, that certain animals were declared to be suitable for sacrificial uses, and others not. No reason can be discerned, it is said, why men, led by the light of of nature exclusively, should have contrived this distinction, especially as it is well known that the majority of pagan nations were utterly unaware of such distinction, and used for sacrifices animals of all classes. It is, therefore, by no means an unnatural supposition that the distinction in question is to be ascribed to divine appointment, and if so, then we may properly consider sacrifices, to which this distinction principally refers, of divine appointment.

It has been said, with a view to the refutation of this argument, that inasmuch as the origin of sacrifices is to be traced

to the suggestion of human reason, unaided by any express command of Jehovah, men would spontaneously make a distinction among animals, judging it suitable to offer some, and to refrain from offering others, on the ground of purity or of some other quality. Nature dictates that nothing should be offered to the Almighty but the best of its kind. For this reason it was, that Jehovah, though never directly enjoining sacrificial services, yet did not blame the act when proceeding from a right motive, and approved the distinction made between clean and unclean animals. The distinction did not originate in the will of God, but rather in the mind of man; still, having once come into existence, it offered an adequate reason for using the one class and discarding the other in sacrificial services.

[On the strength of such reasonings as have now been brought forward, rests that theory of the origin of sacrifices which traces them to the suggestions of a mistaken religious sentiment and to the indulgence of God towards such a sentiment, rather than to any explicit injunction of Jehovah.]

We now turn to the examination of that theory of the origin of sacrifices which Bähr describes in his *Symbolik* (Bd. ii. 269), and which he styles the anthropopathic theory. It is the more worthy of the attention we propose to give it, because it is in many respects analogous to that of Spencer, which has just been exhibited, and Bähr's statements and reasonings may aid somewhat in showing the unsoundness of that theory.

The anthropopathic theory finds the origin of sacrifices in the want of correct conceptions of the divine character, and defines the purpose of sacrifices in accordance with this view. At a low stage of religious development, men have convictions more or less just of the infinite attributes of God, but convictions altogether anthropopathic. They identify the divine character with their own; transferring to the nature of God their own grovelling and sensual wants. These low conceptions have given birth to the idea that it was wrong for one who would approach the Divinity to do so with

empty hands; but that it was needful, in order to secure and retain the favor of God, uniformly to bring a present. Each worshipper would be guided in the selection of a present for his god by a consideration of his own wants, and as these were almost uniformly of a sensual nature, he would choose objects correspondent to these wants, such objects as he was himself most eager to possess, and which gratified most completely his own grovelling desires; under the natural supposition, that what was most grateful to himself must necessarily be so to the deity.

This theory, now, is contradicted by that principle which we have said in a previous Article is recognized among all nations, that it is the blood which constitutes the essential element of sacrifice, and blood never has been a customary, still less a favorite, article of food, and for this reason, could never have been selected as the material of sacrifice on such an account; as little would it be likely to be fixed upon as the best means of conciliating the favor of one's sovereign, to offer him as a present the blood of slain animals. "We have not to do," it is an excellent remark of De Maistre,<sup>1</sup> "in this matter of sacrifices only with presents, gifts, first-fruits, in a word, only with a simple species of homage, such as would properly enough be paid to a feudal lord; for had such been the case, men would have brought the flesh which was sold in the shambles in order to lay it on the sacrificial altar; and in the public worship of God, would have confined themselves to those ceremonies with which they were wont to accompany their domestic repasts. We have to do, on the contrary, with the blood, with a sacrifice in the proper sense of the term. We are to inquire: Why men of all ages and in all places have united in the faith that an atoning efficacy lay, not merely in the offering up of the flesh of a slain animal, but *in the shedding of blood*? This is the problem before us."

Of this problem, the anthropopathic theory of sacrifice gives a very easy, but unfortunately an inadequate, solution.

<sup>1</sup> Abenstunden zu St. Petersburg, iii. S. 387.

Nothing can be more easy than to deduce this deepest and richest idea of religion from the lowest fetichism ; and with a view to this calmly to ignore all antagonistic considerations, even such as are so obvious that they can be apprehended by the senses. How does this theory accord with that idea of sacrifice which prevailed, for example, among the Persians ; according to which, only the soul of the animal, which was supposed to reside in the blood, was offered to the divinity, while the flesh was taken by the person who offered the sacrifice, and eaten by himself and his friends ? How does it suit with those primitive forms of sacrifice which were emblematic of the cosmogony ? What, on this anthropopathic theory, were the libations, especially those of flowing water, which were poured out on the earth ? Were these libations presents of a favorite drink to the divinity ?

It is possible, indeed, that there were among the nations of antiquity some who associated with sacrifice gross anthropopathic conceptions ; and in Homer, expressions may occur which seem to be coincident with the theory now under discussion. This is nothing to the purpose. It is now an established conclusion that the old religions and forms of worship had a symbolic character. Homer evidently so understood the religions of his age. What, then, was characteristic of these religions and forms of worship as a whole, cannot be denied to that particular feature of them, sacrifice, in which their whole essence was, as it were, concentrated. The gods of the ancient religions, as now can no longer be denied, were not mere fetiches, but were personified powers of nature. The nations of antiquity worshipped the elements, the sun, the planets ; and the sacrifices, which they offered to these must of necessity have had some other design than that of satisfying the hunger and thirst of such divinities. Sacrifice is as old as religion itself. It is with all people the first expression of the religious consciousness. It goes back to ante-historical times, and whoever deduces religion from the rudest sensualism may refer sacrifices to the same source ; whoever, on the contrary, seeks the origin of

religion in that element of our nature which is the most truly divine, will be apt to trace sacrifices to the same divine element.

The common supernaturalistic opinion, that sacrifices were originally prescribed by Jehovah, is only so far ill-founded and absurd, as it supposes some external instruction to have been given in the outset as to sacrifices in detail, and the particular rites that were to be practised. This opinion, correctly understood, is far from being unworthy of Jehovah. It cannot be supposed to be thus unworthy only under the notion, that sacrifices were meant to gratify certain sensual wants on the part of the Divinity; a notion certainly altogether erroneous. As the idea of God, and the necessity of giving expression to that idea in some form, is not one derived by us from without, not one which can with any propriety be said to be learned, but on the contrary is immediate and original; so also is the idea of sacrifice, the mode of expressing this idea. From the point of view of our reflecting consciousness, in which we are wont to separate from each other the divine and the natural, the spiritual and the material, this mode of expression may appear strange, improper; but in the intuitive view, which regards the divine and the spiritual as inseparable from the natural and the material, it is by no means singular that men should be self-impelled to represent the surrender of their whole soul and life to the Divinity; and in this surrender all religion consists, by the outward act of giving up some living object which he loves as himself, or to which he bears some very close relation.

If the custom of sacrifice prevailed only here and there, among single nations, and those rude and uncultivated, we should feel less averse to the grovelling theory which we are now combatting; but all nations have retained the custom, and so far from renouncing the usage in the progress of refinement and culture, it has only grown in perfection and completeness along with that progress. We are not to judge of the religious ideas of a people by what the populace

think and believe, or by what an individual sage here and there may have taught; but by the religious documents, the inspired books, which it possesses; and if we examine the religious writings of ancient heathen nations, instead of finding aught favorable to this anthropopathic theory, we find statements which are palpably antagonistic. The religious writings of the Hindoos, for example, abound with the most exalted expressions relative to the object of sacrifices and their original significance. Thus it is said in one of their dialogues: "It is commanded us," says Narud, "to offer to the divinity such things as are pure and without blemish; from which it would seem to follow that God eats as does a mortal man; else what purpose do sacrifices serve?" To which Brimha replies: "God does not eat and drink as a mortal man, but if you do not love God your offering will not be worthy of him; for since all men long for the good things of this life for themselves, so God desires of his creatures a free-will offering of the substance of these things as the strongest proof of the gratitude and affection of men."

The Zend books know nothing of any feeding of the gods by means of sacrifices; on the contrary, such anthropopathic notions are repudiated in the most decisive manner, and the whole ritual ordained to be observed is most decisively antagonistic to these notions. The sacrificer is allowed to take home the flesh of the victim, the only part which can be enjoyed; the god demanding for himself only the *soul*. Greek writers, and especially such as are in other respects earnest apologists for pagan superstitions, scorn altogether this anthropopathic theory, as being wholly absurd and adapted only to the tastes of an ignoble populace. Roman writers do the same. We have no right to consider the language which these writers sometimes use relative to the matter now under discussion as applicable only to the *philosophy of religion*, but not to religion itself, and the rites of worship; they are proofs rather, that the original and pure conceptions of the nature of sacrifice, its fundamental ideas, were never, among any people of antiquity, and under whatever load of



superstition and merely ceremonial observances, wholly lost sight of.

In respect to the Mosaic sacrifices, in particular, it is difficult to see how any one with any amount of reflection on the subject should feel disposed to explain them on this anthropopathic theory. For certainly any clearer and more decisive expressions against it than are found in the religious books of the Jews can be found nowhere else. Reference need only be made here to the fiftieth Psalm. This Psalm was written at a time when sacrificial worship was especially flourishing, was looked upon as a divine institution — one whose credit with the people no religious man would wish to lessen, but, on the contrary, would take all pains to guard against abuse.

But, aside from all this, it remains a pure impossibility that a religion should, on the one hand, confessedly comprehend correct ideas of the personal unity and spiritual nature of the Godhead, and, on the other, prescribe a mode of worship suitable to the most degraded fetichism. The advocates of this theory have, therefore, been forced to represent these grovelling ideas which are involved in the anthropopathic theory, as not having been broached originally by Moses, but as being much older, and as showing themselves here and there in the Mosaic ritual as relics of a ruder and more primitive faith. Illustrations of this are given in such expressions as the food of Jehovah, and Jehovah's smelling a sweet savor. But this mode of relief from the difficulties of an erroneous theory can be used only in defiance of the most common principles of interpretation, according to which every book should be interpreted in consistency with itself. Paul describes the sacrifice of Christ as a sweet savor, and the Redeemer speaks of bodily members as belonging to Jehovah; but to whom did it ever occur, on this account, to impute either to Jesus Christ or to Paul gross views of the divine nature? And why should the ritual of Moses, which so expressly forbids every image of him to whom nothing either in heaven or on earth is like, be

understood literally when it speaks of the arm or the mouth of God, or of sacrifice as being to God a sweet-smelling savor?

If, now, the custom of sacrificing is to be referred to such views of God as were directly repugnant to the fundamental principles of Mosaicism relative to the spiritual nature of God, then would Moses never have allowed the observance of that rite, still less have given to it a wider extent, and enjoined it on the people as the decisive will of God for all time. By such a course, instead of drawing the people away from pagan superstition, he would only have attached them to it the more closely, and forever confirmed them in it.

We come next to consider the vicarious theory of sacrifice.<sup>1</sup> According to this theory, sacrifice is a vicarious atonement or satisfaction offered to the Divinity. The idea is this: Man, conscious of sin and guilt in the presence of God, chooses for himself an animal to which he imputes his sin and guilt, and causes the animal to be put to death. In this manner satisfaction is rendered to the divine justice, and in this consists the atonement. This is the most widely spread, the most common and orthodox view of the subject. It is adopted, for the most part, by the Jewish rabbins, and in modern times has been advocated by the majority of religious teachers, even those who in other respects have been very widely separated from each other. In spite of unimportant modifications which this theory has undergone, here and there, it has uniformly been characterized by this one feature, that sacrifice is of the nature of a substitutionary penal death. Sometimes the sacrifice seems to be regarded in the light of a fine imposed on one who has transgressed the law.

Passing over all subordinate matters, we direct our attention solely to the relation of this theory to the fundamental idea of sacrifice. And our first inquiry concerns the essential element of sacrifice as defined by this theory. This

<sup>1</sup> Bähr, *Symbolik*, Bd. 2, p. 277. It should by no means be forgotten that the compiler of this Article aims merely to exhibit the views of Spencer, Bähr and others, and not his own.

essential element is punishment. The sacrifice is offered as a means of averting punishment. Forgiveness, or the removal of punishment, and reconciliation follow upon the endurance of punishment. The disturbed relations of God and men cannot otherwise be adjusted. No fellowship can exist between the two parties. Now, the punishment cannot be effected otherwise than by the suffering of death, and thus the infliction of death is the only correct expression of the fundamental idea of sacrifice; it is the culmination, the central idea of the whole sacred transaction. Now, we think it is here that the theory is defective. Nothing is susceptible of more conclusive proof than that the shedding of the blood as the seat of the animal soul, but not the death of the victim, — the treatment of the blood, its sprinkling, but not the putting to death, — was the principal thing, the central part of the act.

It will appear, in the first place, on an examination of the Levitical law, that a distinction is very carefully observed between the act of putting the victim to death and the sprinkling of the blood. It was not by the former, but by the latter, that atonement, the object of all sacrifices, was effected. One who was not a priest might slay the victim; but a priest only, acting in behalf of men, and in the name and by the authority of Jehovah, was authorized to sprinkle the blood. All these circumstances indicate quite plainly the subordinate relation in which the killing of the animal stood to the use made of its blood. But, as no one would be likely to assert that the sprinkling of the blood was an act of a penal character, it would seem plainly to follow that the essential idea of sacrifice could not be punishment.

The subject may be regarded in another aspect, and the same conclusion will be reached. Sacrifice was, from the beginning, considered as the central point of worship, the first and strongest expression of the religious sentiment. If, then, the idea of punishment lay at the foundation of sacrifice, it must be supposed to lie at the foundation of religion and of worship — an opinion which few would be disposed

to entertain. Among all Eastern nations, and among the Israelites especially, prayer, or worship, and sacrifice were considered to be identical. This could have been the case only under the notion of the kindred character of the fundamental idea of the two. The idea of prayer and punishment, however, is by no means the same.

That sacrifice is of the nature of a fine is an altogether absurd notion. On this supposition its religious significance is entirely removed. It is no longer a symbolical act, but has degenerated into a species of police transaction. Besides, on this theory, why should one and the same sacrifice sometimes, as in the case of a thank-offering, be denominated a present, and in the case of a sin-offering be styled a fine?

The vicarious theory of sacrifice may, in the next place, be viewed in relation to the idea of atonement involved in it. Atonement, it is said, is effected by means of punishment, especially by the infliction of death on a beast, instead of the sinner himself. By this act the demands of divine justice are said to be satisfied, the anger of God appeased, and God, rather than men, to be reconciled. The scriptures, however, seem to contradict this view of the meaning of the word "atonement," in pointing out the shedding of blood, rather than the death of the animal, as the great means of atonement, allowing, in regard to this point, no interchange of blood and death. Let it be attempted to make such an interchange in some of the passages which relate particularly to this matter, and the correctness of the view we have taken will at once appear. Again, it has been argued, in a previous Article, that the scriptural meaning of the word "atonement" is covering-up or concealing, and, therefore, cannot have as its object anything in God; but in that theory of sacrifice which we are now discussing the direct object of atonement is something in God—the sentiment of anger. Still further, in the case of the thank-offering, the animal sacrificed was put to death; but in this species of sacrifice, surely, God cannot be regarded as an avenging Judge, neither can the infliction of death be viewed as a punishment; and

punishment, therefore, cannot form the essential idea of sacrifice. Finally, it has been not incorrectly argued that if the death of the sacrificed animal was meant as a symbolical punishment, therefore every sin for which a sacrifice was presented ought to be considered as worthy of death. Sacrifices, for example, were required to be presented in the case of sins of ignorance, such as no one, with any show of reason, could regard as capital offences.

We consider, in the next place, the relation of the sacrificer to the sacrifice. We think the vicarious theory of sacrifice faulty in that it confounds a symbolical with a real substitution. Now, the animal was not merely a symbolical, but a real, substitute, and the death inflicted on the animal in order that it might acquire the nature of punishment would have to be preceded by a change of persons — the animal and the man becoming one. The punishment is not figurative, but real. The whole transaction becomes a solemn judicial act; the sin of man being formally laid upon, imputed to, the animal, made to become his; and upon this follows the strictly literal execution on the substitute of the judicial sentence. The transaction, we think, in this way, loses its symbolical religious character, it becomes a mechanical execution of a legal penalty. Yet the ritual of which sacrifices form a part is confessedly religious, symbolical. Sacrifices, therefore, must have this character.

A powerful argument for the vicarious theory may be found, it is alleged, in heathen sacrifices. A thorough examination of the subject, however, will perhaps make manifest the falseness of this allegation. The allegation proceeds upon an entire misconception of the character of the heathen religions. All heathen religion was essentially nature-religion; its worship was the worship of nature, of which sacrifice was the most important feature. A substitutionary or a victim death, the execution of a judicial sentence, would be utterly out of place in such a worship. The idea of death is, of course, wholly out of keeping with the continued existence of nature; and sacrifice, conse-

quently, on the theory in question, could not be the animating principle, as, however, it confessedly is, of pagan worship. In the very earliest times, as far back as the very dawn of history, sacrifices were offered to the elements and to the heavenly bodies. What connection could the idea of a vicarious death, a transference of punishment, have with such sacrifices? And still further, a theory which is so plainly the offspring of reflection as the vicarious theory, would seem incapable of having existed among nations addicted to nature-worship, who lived so exclusively in and with external nature, whose mode of religious thought was wholly cosmical, rather than ethical and religious. Antiquity, in a word, knew nothing of any process of punishment, a judicial execution on the altars of the gods. The life of an individual being was surrendered to the divinity, the original fountain of all life, in order to derive life again from the god, to live henceforth in vital fellowship with him. This is sacrifice in the conception of pagans; and with this, the idea of vicarious punishment is entirely at variance.

Let it be borne in mind, that the idea of atonement in natural religion is altogether different from that which prevails in the Mosaic religion. Sacrifices occur in paganism which are designed to appease, in a certain sense, the anger of the divinity; while such is not the design of any of the Mosaic sacrifices, except on the vicarious theory. At the same time, it is not the design of pagan sacrifices to avert punishment in the usual ethical meaning of that word. The divinity, whose anger is meant to be pacified, is only a power of nature, not a righteous, personal God, whose anger expresses itself merely in the form of natural evil in consequence of the violation of a natural law. Its anger is turned away by means of the death of some being highly valued by those who are enduring the evil. But nowhere is such a sacrifice represented as a punishment, in the proper sense of that term, by which satisfaction is rendered to divine justice.

Finally, there are particular features of pagan sacrifices

which seem decidedly antagonistic to the vicarious theory. The sacrificial victim, it is said, suffers the death due to the sinner, bears his sins. Hence, instead of being regarded as something pure and holy, he becomes in consequence of this imputation of sin, impure, an odious, execrable object. But among the pagans the victim sacrificed is regarded in a very different light. According to Hindoo conceptions, the animals and even the plants used in sacrifice underwent in that act a process of deification, and in the future life were most highly exalted. Especially was this the fact with human sacrifices. So far from speaking of the victim in such terms as would be fitting if sin had been imputed to it and it was thereby accursed, it was addressed in terms like these: "O best of men, most fortunate, who art an aggregate of all celestial virtues, grant to me thy protection. O most excellent, mayest thou reach the highest felicity." His death is never represented as a curse. Instead of the victim's becoming morally odious in consequence of sin imputed to it, the vilest transgressor is, when used as a sacrifice, freed from all moral taint; his blood is transmuted into ambrosia; his brows were encircled with garlands; no symbol certainly of sin and punishment, but of life and the highest honor.

On the whole, one may well ask, with surprise, how an argument for the vicarious theory of sacrifice could be found in heathen usages? Still there are certain passages in the writings of the ancients to which appeal is sometimes made and which therefore must not be altogether overlooked. One such passage, for instance, is found in the account given by Herodotus of the Egyptian modes of worship. The custom prevailed of cutting off the head of the victim in the case of a sacrifice offered with the design of removing a public calamity, and of saying over it these words: "Let the evil now menacing the land of Egypt, or the individual sacrificing, be all turned on this head;" on which the head was either cast into the river or sold to a stranger. But this statement of Herodotus loses much of its force as an argument, when one

remembers that the animals to which he refers are Typhonic animals, objects of peculiar dislike in the mind of an Egyptian, and which he would by no means allow to be considered as a representative of himself. It would be difficult, besides, to prove that the Egyptians had any idea of even a figurative transfer of sin from one being to another, and the infliction of the punishment on such a substitute. This perhaps may serve as an adequate specimen of the amount of support which any particular theory of sacrifice finds in classical writings.

[The exposition which has been given in this Article of certain theories of the origin and meaning of Jewish sacrifices, will not be useless if it shall stimulate any mind to more earnest reflection on that theory which prevails among ourselves, and which, in our judgment, is a most essential element of a correct religious belief. A comparison of this theory with such theories as conflict with it can have no other effect than to disclose in a clearer manner the strength of the foundation on which the former reposes. This comparison we hope to make in a subsequent Article].