

vice, till their passions have become first their masters, then their tyrants, then their punishment, and then their ruin.

And the flesh is not to be subdued and starved in any of us save as we feed and cherish the spirit. We can only overcome evil as we follow after that which is good. But if we seek to subdue the flesh by nourishing and developing the spirit, whether in ourselves or in our children, He who makes large allowance for us all, will largely and effectually help us all. However low he may have fallen, no man need despair of himself so long as he can turn in faith and prayer to Him who never breaks the bruised reed, nor suffers any spark of reviving life to be quenched. Nor, whatever fears may darken our hopes of any whom we love, and in whom we see only too many signs of self-will and self-indulgence, need we yield to our fears so long as we have on our side the Spirit of all purity and goodness; for it is not his will that in any one of his little ones evil should be overcome of good; it is his good pleasure that good should overcome evil in them, as in us all.

S. Cox.

SPIRITUAL SACRIFICES.

1 PETER II. 5.

It is the doctrine of the school of Tübingen that a reconciliatory tendency in any book of the New Testament proves that book to belong to a post-Apostolic age. The church is conceived to have been originally a scene of battle between its own members, in which the followers of the Judaic Peter were arrayed against the disciples of the Gentile Paul. The earliest Christian documents bear, it is said, the stamp of the struggle, and the literature of the first age is distinctly polemical in aim. It is when the first

age has passed away, when the Apostles and their contemporaries have gone to their rest, that there springs up a new literature with an aim which is not polemical—a literature whose leading design is to obliterate the distinctions of former days, and whose pervading tendency is to find a middle ground in which the views of Apostolic Christianity may meet in peace.

We hold, on the other hand, that from the very beginning the tendency of the Christian writings was towards reconciliation. We deny that Christianity ever created a battlefield in the world; she found the world itself a battlefield. The earliest members of her community were indeed separated into two camps, but they occupied these two camps before the advent of Christianity. "Jew" and "Gentile" had been for centuries antithetical terms, and had suggested for ages two opposing currents of human thought. Christianity revealed to certain members of these communities the possibility of a larger fellowship in a wider community—a fellowship in which they might enrol themselves without waiting for the solution of their present differences. In becoming Christians, therefore, they did not at once cease to be Jews and Gentiles. The questions which had divided them had been mainly political questions; and, as Christianity did not propose to revolutionise the sphere of politics, it allowed these questions to remain in abeyance. What Christianity designed to do was to shew that these questions, without being solved, might still be covered, that the spirit of the new religion had a point of contact for either side. As clearly in the undisputed Epistle to the Romans as in the controverted Epistle to the Ephesians was the doctrine taught, that there is at once a Gentile element in Judaism and a Judaic element in Gentilism; that the one had a faith existing before the law, that the other had a law written eternally in the heart.

On this ground—the very ground on which the school of Tübingen has arrived at an opposite conclusion, we hold St. Peter to be the genuine author of the first Epistle which bears his name. We find in that document the reconciliatory tendency which marks the earliest age of Christian literature. St. Peter here comes before us, not only as an identical figure with the Judaic leader in the Acts, but, what will have more weight with the school of Tübingen, as a direct counterpart of the figure of St. Paul in the Romans. Making allowance for their difference of standpoint, the attitude of the two men is precisely the same. With both it is an attitude of reconciliation. Paul, as the Apostle of the Gentiles, naturally reveals himself in the first instance as a reformer; but he labours incessantly to shew that in his work of reformation he still holds fast by the conservative principle. Peter, as the Apostle of the Jews, naturally reveals himself in the first instance as a conservative; but he constantly seeks to demonstrate that in retaining his conservative principle he is following out the lines of a national and a religious reformation.

Nowhere does this Epistle more markedly exhibit the reconciliatory character of the Apostle's mind than in the passage before us. In this passage St. Peter appears, within the compass of a single verse, in the twofold attitude of a conservative and a reformer. Naturally, in order of time, his conservatism has the first place. To the Jewish nation, the aim of Christianity appeared a purely revolutionary one. It seemed to them as if the direct object of the new religion was the destruction of the temple, of the priesthood, of the sacrifice. This was the impression which before all things it was the desire of St. Peter to counteract. He could not bear the thought that he should be esteemed by his countrymen a deserter from the ancient faith; and, therefore, he studiously presents himself as an upholder in spirit of the old ideas. He tells them that so far from coming to destroy

their temple, their priesthood, and their sacrifice, he had come to reveal to them a religion in which their temple, their priesthood, and their sacrifice would be glorified; in which their temple would be purified into a spiritual house, their priesthood elevated into a perfect ministry, and their offerings raised into sacrifices of the heart: "Ye are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

Yet it is easy to see that, in the very statement of this conservative principle, St. Peter has already passed over the boundary-line which divides the Jew from the Gentile, has already revealed himself in the Pauline attitude of a reformer. Declaring himself to be an adherent of the temple, the priesthood, and the sacrifice, he has attached to each of these a new thought which has altered their old character. The temple is no longer a house made with hands, but a house eternal in the heavens. The priest is no longer a minister who represents the people in their *distance* from God, but a man who typifies an union of the soul with the Infinite Holiness. The sacrifice is no longer the offering up of an outward victim whose value as an expiation lies in its physical pain, but the surrender of a human spirit which, by the power and the life of love, has yielded itself voluntarily to the service of God.

It is this liberal element in the theology of St. Peter—identical with the liberal element in the theology of St. Paul—that we propose briefly to consider. The question we wish to examine is this, What is the essential difference between the Jewish and the Christian sacrifice? It is a question which by no means belongs to antiquity. The problem before the mind of St. Peter is the very problem which exercises the theological interest of the nineteenth century. On the solution of that problem depends the determination of the question whether the old or the new theology shall have dominion over the present age. The

central doctrine of Christianity, by the admission of both schools, is the doctrine of the Atonement. By the admission of both schools, the process of the Atonement is a process of sacrifice. It remains to ask, what is the nature of that sacrifice? On the different views entertained on this subject depends the fundamental distinction between what is called the broad, and what is styled the narrow, Church. Is the difference between the Jewish and the Christian sacrifice merely one of degree? Is the Jewish sacrifice defective simply on the ground that it is not sufficiently intense? Does it fall short of the Christian only because the physical pain which it manifests is not excruciating enough? Is the Christian victim superior merely by reason of the fact that He suffered a larger number of bodily stripes and felt, on account of his divinity, a greater intensity of bodily pain? If so, then there is no essential distinction between the Jewish and the Christian sacrifice; the one is simply an aggravated form of the other. But St. Peter declares, in the plainest terms, that the difference between the two sacrifices is not one of degree, but of kind; he says that the Christian sacrifice is distinguished from the Jewish sacrifice in that it is *spiritual*. Here is not merely a difference in intensity, but a difference of nature. The offerings of the Jew are said to be as distinct in their essence from the offerings of the Christian as is the constitution of matter from the constitution of spirit; and as St. Peter declares that the offerings of Christians have their root in the offering of Christ Himself, he places the sacrificial contrast on the very threshold of the new dispensation.

(1) In considering the nature of this sacrificial contrast, it seems to us that there are three respects in which a material differs from a spiritual sacrifice. The first is that, while the value of the material sacrifice lies in the thing given, the value of the spiritual offering consists in the will

to give it. St. Peter declares that this principle of contrast was initiated in the life of the Christian Founder Himself: "Ye are built up an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices *by Jesus Christ.*" Now it is not difficult to see that this phase of spiritual sacrifice has, indeed, its most powerful type in the experience of the Son of Man. There is a deep significance in the words ascribed to Him by the fourth Evangelist, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." In a mere Judaic sense Christ had not yet glorified God on the earth; and still less had He finished the work which God had given Him. To the mind of a Jew it was a paradox to say that the sacrifice of life could be completed, while life itself remained in the body; with him the goal of sacrifice was the physical death of the victim. But this was just the point in which the sacrifice of Christ took a new departure. He here declares, while He is yet in the body, that, in a deep and a profoundly true sense, his work is already done, his offering complete, his self-surrender perfected. What is that sense? What is the thought in the heart of the Son of Man which leads Him, even before the cross, to speak of the sacrifice of the cross as an already accomplished fact? It is the experimental recognition of the truth that, when the will is given, the battle is already over; that when a man has surrendered *himself*, he has in the deepest sense given up his life. Christ's spiritual sacrifice was perfected in the hour when He was able to say, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." His material sacrifice—the offering up of his body—was still to come. But when the will had been surrendered, the rest of the process was comparatively light. The great battle was fought in the heart; and, when the victory in the heart had been won, the Son of Man could already say, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

We have said that this aspect of spiritual sacrifice had its

origin in the spirit of Christ. But we must remember that the spirit of Christ was not limited to the age of his historical manifestation. There is a sense in which St. Peter might claim to be a conservative in the very act of declaring that Christianity was a revolt from the Jewish idea of sacrifice. For, let us bear in mind, that the Christian principle had been in conflict with the Judaic almost from the beginning of the Jewish annals. When it is said, in the fourth Gospel, that Abraham saw Christ's day, it is clearly meant to be conveyed that the Christian or spiritual idea of sacrifice had its germ in an older civilisation than that of the Mosaic culture. And this will be still more evident if we consider what was the special feature in the sacrifice of Abraham. It was clearly its *spiritual* element. What is it which, in the narrative of Genesis, Abraham is actually said to have given up to God? Not his *son*, but his *will*. He does not really surrender Isaac; he simply proves his willingness to surrender him. And the point is that this willingness is itself accepted as a full sacrifice: "Thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me." What Abraham here learns is the fact that there may be an offering acceptable to God where there is neither fire, nor wood, nor victim. He is forbidden to lay his hand upon the outward life of his son, not on the ground that the sacrifice has been remitted, but on the ground that the sacrifice has been already consummated: "Now I know that thou fearest God." Here, on the very threshold of the Hebrew annals, we are confronted by a purely spiritual offering—an act of sacrifice which is begun, continued, and ended in the secret places of the heart, and which is accepted as a finished expiation in the absence of any outward victim. Nor let it be thought that the advent of Mosaism altogether destroyed the influence of this patriarchal type of sacrifice. There perhaps never was a time in Jewish history in which it wholly faded from the

minds of men, or in which it did not operate as a principle of reaction against the spirit of the hierarchy. As Dr. Cox has pointed out in his brochure on "The Larger Hope," there are always to be found two currents of thought in the development of the Old Testament—the one conservative and materialistic, the other free and spiritual. This latter current of freedom and spirituality is really the survival of the life of patriarchal days, the survival of that idea of sacrifice which animated and exemplified the religious faith of Abraham. It is the reaction of a Protestant tendency against a faith of tradition; yet a reaction in which the innovating principle claims to be older than the principle on which it innovates. Again and again throughout the Old Testament we witness the outburst of this reactionary force. In Hosea, in Micah, in the earlier and later Isaiah, in the general tone of the prophetic utterances, and in the pervading spirit of the Hebrew Psalter, we are brought into contact with a tendency of the human heart towards a more primitive and a more individual worship—a worship in which mercy shall take the place of outward sacrifice, in which the humble walk with God shall be substituted for the cumbrous ritual, and in which the travail of the soul shall be esteemed more satisfying than the torture of the outer man: "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire"; "Then said I, Lo, I come," "I delight to do thy will, O my God."

This last quotation which sums up the whole nature of this phase of spiritual sacrifice is in itself specially suggestive. It points to a new and a contrary standard for measuring the value of a divine offering. The value of a material sacrifice lies in its difficulty; the value of a spiritual sacrifice lies in its painlessness. The most perfect offering of the human will is the offering which is made most voluntarily, or, in other words, which is given with the least pain. The man who surrenders his self-interest

after a violent struggle is spiritually a less developed being than the man who, impelled by love, freely and gladly surrenders his self-interest. In the latter case the act is more voluntary, just because it is more morally necessary. The man cannot help sacrificing himself; but the reason of his inability comes, not from without, but from within. He is constrained to do so by a law of his nature, to resist which would be pain. In the obedience to that law he finds joy, a joy which swallows up the sense of sacrifice. The surrender of his self-interest is no longer a mortification, but an enhancement of his being. It is in this light that the great paradox of the Christian Sacrifice becomes clear. From any materialistic standpoint, it seems a contradiction in terms that the Son of Man, under the very shadow of the cross, should bequeath to the world his peace, and offer mankind participation in his joy. Peace and joy would appear to be the last things compatible with a cross. But, in the spiritual ideal of sacrifice, they are not only compatible, but crowning accompaniments. They constitute the very glory of the offering. They indicate that the offering has been purely voluntary, that it has come from the very heart of the giver, and has been given in the *fulness* of his heart. They tell us that the Son of Man has reached the goal of his own petition, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"—acquiescingly, joyfully, consentaneously. The passive endurance has become an active ministration, and the submission to an inevitable law has been transfigured into the power of love.

(2) We come now to the second point of difference between a material and a spiritual sacrifice. They are not only different in the standard of their value; they differ also in the point of their commencement. A material sacrifice has its beginning in an act; a spiritual sacrifice has its beginning in a thought. And here, again, we shall find the type and origin of this sacrifice in the life of the

Son of Man. The passage which most strikingly exhibits it in this aspect is Philippians ii. 6, where, in speaking of that process by which our Lord emptied Himself, St. Paul says, "Who, being in the form of God, did not clutch at his equality with God." What we have here specially to observe is that, in the view of St. Paul, the process of *kenosis*, by which our Lord emptied the Divine into the limits of the human nature, had its beginning in a *thought*. It originated, according to him, not in the earthly, but in the heavenly state. It began while the Son of Man was as yet in the form of God, in the state of pre-existent glory. It took its rise, not in an act, but in what we should humanly call, a sentiment. It would almost seem as if St. Paul contemplated the Incarnation as having had its origin in a stage behind the infancy of Jesus, a stage of pre-existent love in which the Son of God contemplated the sorrows of the sons of men. The first stage of the Incarnation, in the Pauline view, seems to have been a phase of Divine sympathy. In a higher than any forensic sense He who was in the form of God, and while yet He was in the form of God, stooped to take the place of the sinner. He became the substitute for the world before He was manifested in the world; the beginning of his substitution was his sympathy. He took the place of the sinner in thought before He took it in fact. He emptied Himself sympathetically into the circumstances of the sons of men, conceived Himself to be in their place, imputed to Himself their needs and their surroundings. The sacrifice of Calvary had its origin in that spiritual process by which the Divine Logos began to identify his life with the life and the burdens of the world.

Such we conceive to be the doctrine of St. Paul in this remarkable passage. It will be evident that it is a doctrine very rich in practical suggestiveness. It is in the light of this view especially that we are able to understand how the

sacrifice of Christ can be bequeathed as an heirloom to his followers; how the disciple can take up the cross of the Master, and claim to be partaker in the very sufferings of his Lord. When St. Peter speaks of offering up spiritual sacrifices through Jesus Christ, he takes it for granted that the disciple and the Master have a common cross to bear. In what respect, then, can the Christian of all ages claim to have fellowship with Christ's suffering? Clearly only on the ground of the spirituality of Christ's sacrifice. The outward circumstances of a life can never be exactly reproduced in other lives; but the spirit of the life may be reproduced perpetually. It is because Christ's sacrifice had its beginning in a sympathetic thought, that our sacrifice may be like his. That likeness is reached when we have begun to empty ourselves into sympathy with the lives and circumstances of others, to see with their eyes and to feel with their hearts. There comes a time in the life of all earnest souls when the full cup of personal enjoyment seems unworthy to be snatched at, when the voices of sorrow in the valleys drown their own songs in the plain, and the remembrance of what others have lost makes them forgetful of their gains. That is the true spirit of the Christian *kenosis*. It is not yet a sacrificial act, but it is the root of all sacrificial action; nay, in one sense, it is more than any act can give; for it is the gift of the self, the charity of the thought, the sympathetic assumption of another's human life.

(3) This brings us to the third and final phase of contrast between a material and a spiritual sacrifice. We have seen that they differ in their standard of value, and disagree as to their point of commencement. We have now to observe that they are contrasted also in respect of their continuity or permanence. A material sacrifice is one which, by its very nature, demands constant repetition; a spiritual sacrifice, if it be a full expression of the heart, is offered

once for all. This is the side of the subject on which the writer to the Hebrews has laid peculiar stress in his contrast between the old life and the new. In speaking of Christ as the true high priest, he says: "Who needed not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once for all, when he offered up himself." Now let us understand what *is* the point of difference which the writer to the Hebrews here desires to evolve. It is a subject on which, in our opinion, there is a very prevalent misconception. Does he wish it to be inferred that the priesthood of a material sacrifice is more permanent in its duration than the priesthood which offers spiritual gifts? This is the popular notion. Christianity is commonly thought to differ from Judaism in the diminution of the sacrificial element. It is supposed to be a dispensation in which men have been freed from the duty of sacrifice, by the fact of one great sacrifice having been once for all consummated; and the writer to the Hebrews is cited as a witness to this view. Yet a deeper study will convince us that the testimony of this writer is precisely to the opposite effect. What he desires to shew is in truth just the converse of the popular opinion. He wishes to exhibit Christianity as superior to Judaism, not by reason of the diminution, but on account of the increase of its sacrificial element. He regards the sacrifices of Judaism as inferior to the spiritual sacrifice of Christianity in point of permanence. The weak point of Judaism, in his view, is the fact that it has not "a priest *for ever*." Its priesthood can only act periodically, and, therefore, it does not operate continuously. It has certain times and seasons for sacrifice; but between these times and seasons there are intervals which can never wholly be accounted for. This priesthood, therefore, is deficient in the permanence of its sacrificial power; it is a priesthood only for stated *days* of life. But, when the writer to the

Hebrews turns to Christianity, he finds, for the first time, a principle of sacrifice which is not periodical, but permanent; a principle whose operation is no longer limited to stated days, but is manifested in every minutest act of every hour. It is this contrast which he really aims to express in Hebrews vii. 23, 24: "And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood." So unchangeable to him is the priesthood of Christ that he is not afraid to regard it as transported beyond death, and existing in the state of glorification: "We have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens."

What, then, is this strange species of sacrifice which is permanent through life and through death, without being once repeated? Its nature may be expressed in a single word—love. Love is not a series of sacrifices: it is a surrender of the spirit once for all; that is to say, it is a surrender which, in being once made, has been made for all emergencies and for all time. There are, doubtless, outward sacrifices which love has still to perform; but the great offering is the love itself. It is not correct, except in a popular sense, to say that there are times in which the mother must sacrifice for her child; it would be more accurate to affirm that maternity is a perpetual sacrifice. Some such analogy as this certainly lay in the mind of the sacred writer when he declared the great Christian offering to be perpetual because unrepeated. The high priesthood of Christ is the sacrifice of Himself, the emptying of Himself. He does not need to repeat the process, for He has never once taken *back* Himself, never abandoned that attitude of *kenosis* by which He gave Himself for man. That which we have inherited from Him, the gift which He has received for men is, his own spirit, the spirit which does not count the number of beings it shall succour, nor the

number of times it shall forgive ; but which, by one thought of momentary and absolute surrender, has become that unfailing charity which beareth, hopeth, and believeth all things.

GEORGE MATHESON.

THE TWO PROMISES GIVEN TO ABRAHAM.

THERE are two Promises (Gen. xii. 3 and Gen. xxii. 18), given to Abraham at different periods of his life, the distinction between which has been generally overlooked by commentators. The first was given to him as Abram (the *exalted father* of a chosen nation), on the occasion of his shewing his faith in God by leaving his "country and kindred and father's house," to go into a land that God was to shew him, "not knowing whither he went" (Heb. xi. 8). The second was the blessing pronounced upon him as Abraham (the *father of a multitude*, or spiritual seed comprising believers of all nations), on the occasion of his exhibiting the highest instance of faith ever reached by a mere mortal, in giving up, as a sacrifice, without a word of remonstrance, his only and beloved son Isaac, on whose life all God's promises to him were suspended. It were strange indeed if so wonderful an instance of faith as this last called forth no higher promise than the first, if the second was, as it is generally regarded, a mere repetition of the earlier promise, confirmed only by the addition of an oath on God's part. We have but to place the two promises in juxtaposition to see that every term in the later rises in intensity above the earlier :—

"In thee—shall all the families of the land—be blessed" (Gen. xii. 3).

"In thy seed—shall all the nations of the earth—bless themselves" (Gen. xxii. 18).