

Original.

THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

DEMONSTRATED DIVINE :

AS EXHIBITING IN ITSELF THE ENTIRE FULFILLMENT

of the

JEWISH TYPES AND PROPHECIES

Dedicated to our modern Freethinkers.

CHAPTER I

THE FREE WILL AND FALL OF MAN: THE ATONING VICTIM, AND ORIGIN OF SACRIFICE.

It is evident to reason from the very idea we have of God's infinite perfection, that the higher order of beings whom he has made, the rational creatures, must have been made for an everlasting purpose; that is to know, admire, love and praise him, for a purpose therefore that can never be accomplished, as he, being infinite in all perfection, can never be fully known, admired, loved and praised by finite beings. The same reason then why God called them into existence, continues at all times, why they should exist. Nor would it have been worthy of infinite wisdom to have created them only to appear and disappear, as passing toys and sports, for his Omnipotence. The other creatures, made but for the use or trial of such, must cease to be, when the end for which they were made is fully answered. But those, to whom he has imparted the knowledge of himself, have received in that knowledge, the sure and indubitable pledge of immortality.

These, however, to be perfectly happy, which all must be who are once admitted to the clear vision and enjoyment of God, must be constituted free agents; otherwise, their operations being all the effect, not of choice, but of necessity, they would have nothing in them of personal worth; nothing of merit to endear them to their Maker, and at the same time to enhance and complete their bliss from the sense of having, as far as in them lay, deserved it. It is their freedom of agency which constitutes their dignity as children of God, obeying him from motives of love; not as slaves, from compulsion, or necessity. Now, this free will granted to the creatures, leaves it in their power to obey or disobey; not however, without sufficient warning giving them of the dreadful consequences of their disobedience.

The only rational creatures, of whom we have any knowledge or report, angels and men, have been thus tried. Concerning the angels it has been revealed to us that a great proportion of them, abusing of their free will, in opposition to that of their Maker, have been cast down from heaven and delivered over to eternal torments. As to man, we are also apprized that he too, when allowed to be tried by the tempting fiend, abused of his free will to do that which God had so strictly forbidden him; hence that he, and his whole race, thus polluted in its source, became like the rebel angels, liable to be cast off for ever, and devoted to endless misery. But God in pity for so weak a creature, whose guilt did not originate in himself, but in the cruel cunning of the envying fiend, had resolved to manifest in man's regard the most endearing of his attributes, his mercy and unbounded fatherly love.

The offence of our first parents was a crime of far greater magnitude than at first it may appear. It was a deliberate act of disobedience to God, and a formal renunciation of our dependence on him. It was setting at defiance all his threats, and thanklessly undervaluing all his favours. It was an offence infinite in its object, and could therefore be atoned for only by an infinite satisfaction. But no finite creature could make such a satisfactory atonement; and yet, without such, our doom to endless misery was irrevocably decreed—Nothing less could satisfy God's infinite justice. Nothing less could reconcile us with his offended Majesty. But man, the offender, must make the required atonement, and this for man, a finite creature, it was absolutely impossible to achieve. Yet that, which seemed impossible to all the creatures, God himself vouchsafed to accomplish; and did for our weak and lowly race what in the rigour of his justice he disdained doing for the fallen princes of his heavenly household. He stoops himself to become the man sole capable, as such, of making the infinite satisfaction indispensably required. "Behold I come," says he, "in the head of the book," (in the beginning of Genesis, the most ancient of books, CH. III.) "it is written of me that I should do thy will, O my God! I have desired it, and thy law in the

midst of my heart;" Ps. xxxix. 8. Yes, I will be the man without failure to do thy will. "Sacrifice and oblation thou didst not require. All these were as nothing in thy sight, but in as far as they pointed at me. "But thou hast pierced ears for me. I am thy willing servant for ever;" EXODUS xxi. 6. "A body thou hast fitted for me;" HEB. x. 6. Thou hast formed for me by thy divine power & humanity in the womb of the purest of virgins: The seed of the woman; behold I come!" O what a mystery is here; which unless revealed to us by God himself, no created intellect could ever have imagined! And yet this mystery, so inconceivable in itself, is made to man, for whom it was designed, less a mystery than to the spiritual beings; for the union of man's soul with his body, of two substances so distinct, and apparently incompatible; and yet so closely joined as both to form but one individual person, shews the possibility of that close and hypostatical union which has taken place in Jesus Christ of his divine nature with our humanity.

This then is the victim so long foretold and so many ways prefigured, that was completely to cancel, as *sinless man*, the debt of *sinful man* due to divine justice; and by yielding up his life as the *Son of man*, to reverse our doom of eternal death; to reconcile us with our offended God; and restore to us our forfeited inheritance; verifying thus the saying of the Psalmist, "Mercy and truth have met each other; justice and peace have kissed;" Ps. lxxxiv. 11. This is the victim alluded to in all the sacrifices ordained by God. This was the promised propitiatory victim emblematically "slain from the beginning of the world;" APOC. xiii. 8; the pledge of whose coming, and the indication of whose redeeming qualities were afforded us in the various sacrificial oblations prescribed to his worshippers by the Deity; while these, by their offerings, testified their firm faith in all his promises; their ardent wish of their fulfilment; their sure reliance upon his fatherly mercy; and their grateful sense of all his favours.

Such was the origin and the end of sacrifice, a rite observed as the most solemn and indispensable in the religious worship of every nation. For there never existed a people upon earth, however much they may have strayed from the knowledge of the true God, who did not consider sacrifice as the supreme and indispensable act of homage due to the deity, whatever they supposed the deity to be.

A rite, so universally and unexceptionably observed, could not but have been coeval with our race; as appears from Abel's sacrifice recorded in Genesis—a rite transmitted down to all generations through the spreading branches of the human family. They, however, who lost the knowledge of the true God, lost the object of their adoration and expectation, though they retained the rites. Their victims and oblations, like the gods whom they worshipped became capriciously fantastical, ridiculous and detestable. Every allusion to the promised expiatory victim had disappeared, and the chief end of sacrifice was wholly lost sight of. In their idolatrous blindness they placed all their merit in the quantity or quality of their offerings, and not unfrequently sacrificed as the best they could afford, even their fellow creatures, to their imaginary divinities. The Jews even, the worshippers of the one true God, were often affected with the same heathen mania. Forgetting the main end and object of all their sacrifices, they too, like the benighted pagans, imagined their mere offerings, without the proper intentions or dispositions, all sufficing to propitiate their God, as if he the Lord of nature could be enriched with their gifts, or feasted with their hecatombs. Of such absurd and insulting homage paid to him by his chosen people, he loudly complains by his prophets.—"I will not," says he, "take calves out of thy house; nor he-goats out of thy flocks; for all the beasts of the woods are mine; the cattle on the hills and the oxen.—I know all the fowls of the air, and with me is the beauty of the field. If I should be hungry, I would not tell thee; for the world is mine and the fulness thereof. Shall I eat the flesh of bullocks; or drink the blood of goats?" Ps. xlix. 9, &c.

There could therefore be no other rational, meaning attached to the sacrificial rite than this; (which was always understood by the true believers,) that man for his sin was doomed to everlasting death, a victim due to God's avenging justice; that God, to spare him, and reverse his otherwise hopeless doom, had resolved to substitute in his stead, and of his race, a victim to his justice sole capable as man, of satisfying for the sins of mankind: a *God-man*, whose every act of atonement was to divine justice infinitely satisfactory; that, as figurative of him, and to keep up our hope, as well as to sketch out to us the redeeming, sanctifying, soul sustaining and

saving qualities of such a victim, he had ordained certain victims to be slain, and oblations to be made, with various ceremonies, all and each indicative of some great end and consequence of our final redemption; all which we find perfectly explicable in the Jewish dispensation, and which cannot otherwise be rationally accounted for; all which too we find perfectly fulfilled in the christian dispensation, where the promise and the figure end in the accomplishment and the reality; as the Saviour himself affirmed, "I came not," said he, "to abolish but to fulfil the law. Amen, I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or tittle of the law shall not pass till all be fulfilled;" MATT. v. 17, 18.

As a refutation of Mr. Bethune's sermon given in the last Church, we submit the following, to be continued, from the CATHOLIC HERALD.

TO THE REV. W. H. ODENHEIMER, A. M.;

Rector of St. Peter's Church, Philadelphia.

No. 1.

REV. SIR,—I have of late been perusing your "Offering to Churchman," which purports to convey 'a few historical hints connected with the origin and compilation of the prayer book.' Had it contained nothing but the history of the changes, which that book underwent, the writer of these few lines would scarcely have done himself the honour of thus addressing you. But when I perceived that the few facts really connected with the history of the Prayer Book, occupied but a small part of the volume; that the principal portion was made up of a laboured dissertation on the Apostolic religion of the Protestant Episcopal church, I could not but imagine that the demonstration of this was intended to be the chief object of the 'offering.' I would not be understood to say, that you have been imitating those gentlemen who continually force their hobby on public notice, whatever else they assume to treat of. Whether their subject be philosophy, history or geography; if they give but an annual, or an almanac, they must engraft upon each, a due portion of abuse of popery. But I do not accuse you sir of similar motives. The position which your church occupies, endeavouring to stop short in the headlong career to which Protestantism is doomed by the very principles of its existence, forces you, on all occasions, to grasp at the appearance of Apostolic authority, which you think you have retained, and which you hope will save you from the fate of your fellow-Protestants. But alas! the anchor to which you trust, has no hold in the shifting sands; your bishops are not those whom the Holy Ghost appointed to govern the church of God; the ground on which you rest, is itself as weak as the vain systems from which you recoil.

Your first chapter is principally made up of passages from various Protestant writers, 'in and out of the church,' who admired your prayer book. Though these are indeed flattering, their value must be very much diminished with those amongst your readers, who will recollect how easily it is to compile a list of Protestant authorities, 'in and out of the church,' for almost any assertion, one is pleased to make; I will not except the exclusive tenets of Catholics, nay, not even the primacy of the Pope. The best encomium which you bestowed on the prayer book, that, which is the real secret of the admiration with which many contemplate a great portion of it, is contained in your remark, that 'in parts of its praises, the souls of a Chrysostom, Cyprian, Ambrose, and Augustine, went up to heaven.' If any one doubted of the truth of this assertion, you could have told him that nine-tenths of that book are translated from the missals, and breviaries of that church, of which these great saints were members; that in the selection of scripture, the collects, the Te Deum, the creeds, the litany, the thanksgivings, you have chiefly followed, and in a great measure translated those used by 'the everlasting church.' Your readers may not appreciate the observation, because they are not acquainted with the spirit of the doctrines which animate that church; but they may rest assured, that what is retained, is, after all, but the shell that surrounded the ancient liturgy. The relation which the shred they retain, bears to the ancient whole, of which it constituted a small part, can be understood, only by referring to the empty symbols of a Protestant communion table, and the vivifying dogma of Catholicity, which points to a Saviour present on our altars, the true source of the inspiration of a Chrysostom, and an Augustine. Of this we may see more in the sequel.